

PROHIBITION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

by

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B.A., Waterloo University College, 1963

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS  
in the Department  
of  
History

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

April, 1969

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## ABSTRACT

Prohibition in British Columbia was in force for only a short time -- 1917 to 1921 -- and as a political issue it was often overshadowed by more urgent matters like the war, or even railway construction. Nevertheless, the question of the control of the liquor traffic kept recurring with increasing frequency at both the local and provincial levels, in the years following 1900.

Temperance sentiment in British Columbia was provoked by the social problems that accompanied the loosely controlled liquor outlets and this sentiment was further encouraged by the churches as they grew stronger in the developing province. Early temperance feeling expressed itself in the coming of temperance societies and in restrictive liquor legislation. British Columbians wanted a smooth-working, prosperous society based on an acceptable moral standard and by the turn of the century support for some form of control of the liquor traffic, if not prohibition, was widespread. Most Anglicans and Roman Catholics, as well as many Presbyterians, while opposed to prohibition, favored restrictive liquor legislation. (The fact that the Liberal party in its platform linked prohibition with progressive reforms like extending the franchise to women and the elimination of government corruption gained additional support for local option and prohibition legislation.)

Support for the prohibition movement came from merchants, businessmen and professional men and they led the strong temperance organizations -- the Local Option League and the Peoples Prohibition Association. The great majority of these prohibitionists were members of the Baptist, Methodist and Presbyterian churches, evangelical denominations that viewed the saloon as a competitor for the allegiance of the working classes. Opposition to prohibition came chiefly from people directly engaged in the liquor traffic, like brewers and hotelmen, but also from organized labor and from people outside the churches.

The Dominion prohibition plebiscite of 1898, the provincial local option plebiscite of 1909 and the provincial prohibition referendum of 1916, all ran in favor of eliminating or restricting the liquor traffic and indicated that extensive support for some form of liquor traffic control existed in British Columbia. However, before World War I, the prohibition forces in the province were not as powerful as similar organizations elsewhere in Canada, and while other provinces were gradually being dried up by restrictive liquor laws, the dries in British Columbia were unable to advance their cause.

The outbreak of World War I created an emergency situation and the people and government of British Columbia and █ indeed of Canada, were faced with the serious question of conserving all available resources -- money, manpower, foodstuffs -- for the war effort. Prohibitionist propaganda skillfully exploited this situation by emphasizing that the liquor traffic interfered with both individual efficiency and the economic strength of the nation and that it was therefore unpatriotic to support the nefarious trade any longer. People who had

previously opposed prohibition now supported it at least for the duration of the war. The dry cause was victorious in the prohibition referendum of 1916 and the wets were further discomfited by their inability to obtain compensation for their business losses.

(When peace returned public support for prohibition ended and the act became notorious for the way in which it was either circumvented or violated rather than in the way it was enforced. Temperance sentiment was also affected by a post-war pessimism toward all efforts promoting or claiming to promote social progress, particularly legislation with moral overtones, like prohibition.) Prohibitionists fought hard to retain the act but in another referendum they were soundly defeated and prohibition was repealed.

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## INTRODUCTION

Historians in Canada have almost entirely ignored the subject of prohibition. Ruth Spence's Prohibition in Canada<sup>1</sup> is the only major published work in this area and although the book represents considerable research it is unacceptable as serious history because in it the prohibition movement and its leaders are uncritically championed. The book is an attempt, the author confesses, "to appreciate the struggles of those through whose labors we have been enabled to reach this pinnacle of opportunity [prohibition]." <sup>2</sup> Prohibition is told as a success story and, since the book was published in 1919, it contains no account of the repeal of prohibition. Limited as the value of this book is, no historian has put himself to the task of improving on it.

Neglect of the subject of prohibition is partly understandable in historians who are seeking to emphasize the main themes of national, political and economic history, and there is no originality in the charge that Canadian historians have ignored social history. It is also possible that a strong dislike by liberal-minded historians of the kind of legally enforced morality represented by prohibition has led them to dismiss prohibition as a minority, bound-to-fail movement, and to consider its short-lived implementation as a political fluke. Such a liberal view is criticized in a recent article

by J.C. Burnham, an American historian.<sup>3</sup> Burnham claims that prohibition has usually been viewed, not as a reform, but as an ill-conceived "experiment" the repeal of which involved no loss to society. He goes on to suggest that historians, like most Americans, hold that in the twentieth century good social legislation has been of a cumulative nature, and that if laws were found to be unworkable or useless, they were discarded, and this is what happened in the case of prohibition. Burnham further suggests that a reexamination of the social effects of prohibition legislation indicates that prohibition was a beneficial reform and that perhaps the repeal of prohibition was ill-conceived. In general, American historians have long been intrigued by prohibition in the United States and have found it a useful field of study -- "one of the most instructive episodes in our history," says Richard Hofstadter<sup>4</sup> -- and they have written a great deal on the subject including not only monographs but also studies placing the movement in wider perspective. American prohibition has been studied in relation to the progressive movement, to the rural-urban split and to religion. In Canada, historians have yet to explore prohibition as it relates to these areas.

Neglect of prohibition by historians in Canada has not, of course, been total and there does exist a somewhat dubious historical framework within which a student of the subject can work. One view is that prohibition in Canada was a religious and reactionary minority movement. Stephen Leacock, who experienced prohibition at first hand, was at his



caustic best when attacking the movement. He wrote an article warning Englishmen against the greatest social tyranny "since the fires died out at Smithfield:"

But few people realized the power of fanaticism or the peculiar weakness of democratic rule upon which it fed. From the crusade of a despised minority, a mark for good-natured ridicule rather than fear, the prohibition movement became a vast continental propaganda, backed by unlimited money, engineered by organized hypocrisy.<sup>5</sup>

Prohibition, according to Leacock, had come like a thief in the night, clad in the garments of a narrow puritan fanatic. He derisively described the "despised minority" as a few greedy small-town shopkeepers who wanted the money being spent on liquor, and a few drab farmers who voted the city dry as a spite against its lights and gaiety.<sup>6</sup> Examples of this thief-in-the-night interpretation of prohibition can also be found, though rarely explicitly, in the work of contemporary historians. For example, Joseph Schull, in explaining Laurier's decision to hold a federal plebiscite on prohibition in 1898, says that "the Prime Minister, in an unwary moment, had been lured into promising a national referendum on prohibition."<sup>7</sup> The statement implies that Laurier was tricked. In actual fact, the "luring" had been done by the Liberal Party itself, which, after full discussion, adopted the plebiscite plan as part of its platform in 1893 in hopes of getting the temperance vote, and the promise of a plebiscite was used again in the 1896 election campaign.<sup>8</sup> The best history of British Columbia includes only a few references to prohibition but they are sufficient to indicate that the author looks at

prohibition in terms similar to those of Leacock. Thus Margaret Ormsby speaks of the prohibitionist as a "tensely righteous type of patriot, who seemed completely out of character in a setting which had never been noted for its puritannical principles."<sup>9</sup>

Leacock's view of prohibition is opposed by the interpretation of Arthur R.M. Lower. Re-examining the prohibition story forty years after Leacock, Lower finds that the movement was not led only by a few "cranks" but that "large, intelligent and prosperous sections of nearly every community" supported it.

The drive against the liquor traffic was conducted in every form and on every plane, educational, emotional, evangelical, economic. It was compounded of social disinterestedness, religious -- from hot and strong to staid and dignified -- fanaticism, and detached analysis of the situation. It caught up all ranks and classes, . . .<sup>10</sup>

Any explanation of the prohibition movement in British Columbia fits into the framework of these two differing interpretations, and yet the experience with prohibition there was unique in Canada. Prohibitionists in British Columbia appeared weaker than their counterparts elsewhere and, as a result, British Columbia got provincial prohibition later than all the other provinces except Quebec, which never put such a law into effect. Furthermore, every other province, including Quebec, experimented with prohibition at the local level (local option) under federal or provincial law before province-wide prohibition was attempted. Prohibitionists in the Pacific province also tried to obtain a provincial local option law but without success.

The weakness of the British Columbia temperance movement can be explained partly by economic influences on the young society, and partly because of the numerical predominance of the British (and Anglican) element in the provincial population.

The economic development of British Columbia began with the fur trade and remained linked primarily with the exploitation of the natural resources of the province -- minerals, timber and fish -- and from the beginning a large proportion of British Columbians settled in cities and towns. Completely dependent on particular industries, towns like Barkerville, Donald, Douglas, Fairview, Fort Steele and Phoenix, places that were connected mainly with railway construction or mining, flourished and then died. Fishing and lumbering only provided seasonal employment and thus the men who were engaged in such work were transient to a certain extent. Under these conditions it took time for society in British Columbia to develop a sense of permanency.<sup>11</sup> In the eastern provinces the economy developed differently. There, an early period of settlement and social dislocation was followed by a predominantly rural and stable way of life and the populous rural areas consistently supported moral reform legislation. British Columbia never became a rural province and consequently the same degree of social stability took much longer to develop.<sup>12</sup>

In British Columbia, the population composition and the relative strength of the various religious denominations

was considerably different from that of the other English-Canadian provinces. In the years between 1900 and 1920, no other province added to its population such a large proportion of English and Scottish immigrants direct from the British Isles. In the prairies, where many immigrants came from Central and Eastern Europe, the prohibition movement grew more quickly since in both religious and political circles it was thought urgent that an enforced minimum standard of morality was required to assist in the "Canadianization" of the foreigners.<sup>13</sup> As for the churches, nowhere in Canada did the Church of England have such a numerically dominant position as it had in British Columbia and this church was traditionally more tolerant on the question of the personal use and sale of liquor than were the Presbyterians and the Methodists.\*

-> Thus, the aims of the prohibitionists in British Columbia were continually frustrated while in the eastern provinces and in the prairies, the prohibition idea gained widespread support. The outbreak of war had an influence on society in British Columbia that made the idea of prohibition more generally acceptable. However, when the war ended, so did much of the support for prohibition. In the following three chapters, the rise and fall of prohibition in British Columbia is examined. An attempt is made to answer the pertinent questions: who the prohibitionists were, how they succeeded in getting prohibition passed, and why prohibition was repealed.

## NOTES ON THE INTRODUCTION

1. Ruth E. Spence, Prohibition in Canada (Toronto: Ontario Branch of the Dominion Alliance, 1919).
2. Ibid., p. v.
3. J.C. Burnham, "New Perspectives on the Prohibition 'Experiment' of the 1920's," Journal of Social History, II (1968), 51-68.
4. Preface to Andrew Sinclair, Prohibition: The Era of Excess (Boston & Toronto: Little, Brown and Co., 1962), p. vii.
5. Stephen Leacock, "The Warning of Prohibition in America," National Review (London), LXXIII (1919), 680. Writing earlier, Goldwin Smith made similar comments about the temperance movement. See his "Prohibitionism in Canada and the United States," MacMillan's Magazine, LIX (1889), 338-49.
6. Leacock, p. 683.
7. Joseph Schull, Laurier the First Canadian (Toronto: MacMillan, 1965), pp. 339-40.
8. Spence, pp. 231-8.
9. Margaret Ormsby, British Columbia: a History (Macmillans in Canada, 1958), p. 389.
10. Arthur R.M. Lower, Canadians in the Making, a Social History of Canada (Don Mills: Longmans Canada, 1958), p. 413.
11. The first miners came with the intention of getting rich quickly and then getting out of the country. See S.D. Clark, The Social Development of Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1942), p. 318.
12. British Columbia was classified as containing a predominantly urban population in 1901 and it was the first Canadian province to be so classified. However not until 1921 did the manpower requirements for agriculture exceed those of any other single industry, and even then only 18% of the labor force was involved in agriculture; see Census of Canada, 1951, X, Table 62, pp. 5-6. The two main rural areas in British Columbia were the Okanagan Valley and the Fraser Valley, and both of these areas consistently supported prohibition.
13. George Emery, "Canadian and Ontario Protestantism and Social Reform, 1896-1914," Unpublished paper, Simon Fraser University, 1967, pp. 8-9. The idea was also present in British Columbia: "Christian Temperance work must be done

among our foreign population, for therein lies a great measure to the future greatness of our country. Many of these foreigners are becoming Canadian citizens, and by their vote and influence will lower our moral standards if we do not raise theirs." Circular letter to all WCTU groups in B.C., signed by Lilian Wright, provincial secretary, B.C. WCTU. Dec. 1920, Papers of the People's Prohibition Association, (PPA), at Alcohol Research and Educational Centre (AREC), Vancouver.

## CHAPTER I

### THE RISE OF TEMPERANCE SENTIMENT

The rise of temperance sentiment in British Columbia is analyzed here by an examination of three aspects of the problem: the social conditions and problems that provoked temperance sentiment; the role of the churches and their religious view of society; and, the work of the secular temperance societies.

#### I

There is a relationship between the rise of temperance sentiment and social conditions in developing areas in Canada. A few historians have explored this relationship, particularly in eastern Canada, and have published articles in which it is shown that as pioneering communities developed, they inevitably reacted against the demoralizing influence of excessive drinking.<sup>1</sup> In the Maritimes for example, social gatherings known as "frolics" frequently degenerated into drunken brawls in both rural and urban areas and so temperance societies caught on as respectable alternatives to these frolics.<sup>2</sup> Thus, according to William Elgee, a Canadian social historian, the temperance movement "arose neither out of doctrinal teaching nor Bible interpretation but from the daily evidence of a great evil in the present human situation."<sup>3</sup> ✓

Elgee's conclusion is useful in explaining the rise of temperance sentiment in British Columbia. Undeniably, strong drink caused social problems. Liquor was cheap, plentiful, and of high alcoholic content, and individuals who drank too much became personally demoralized and, if they had families, the hardship was compounded. Some people felt that unscrupulous liquor sellers took advantage of human weakness for their own profit and many saloons and bootleg joints became centres for all kinds of disreputable and illegal activities. In general, British Columbians relied heavily on spirits as well as beer to quench their thirst. The same was true of all of Canada before the twentieth century and Canada did not really become a nation of beer drinkers until after prohibition when government taxes began making spirits too expensive. The people of British Columbia quickly took the lead in per capita consumption of alcohol and by 1893 they were imbibing one and one half times as much as their nearest competitors in eastern Canada.<sup>4</sup> Wide-open drinking practices and other moral excesses provoked disgust in many sensitive people and a reaction in favor of moral and temperance reform legislation.

Excessive use of alcoholic beverages caused social problems in the early mining and railway towns but the unstable nature of such communities discouraged efforts to impose social and moral guidelines. One observer of the gold rush days stated that "it would almost take a line of packet ships running between here and San Francisco to supply this Island with grog, so great a thirst prevails among its inhabitants."<sup>5</sup>



The sudden influx of a large, transient male population looking for gold resulted in the social disorganization of British Columbia communities and in serious problems in the area of morality. S.D. Clark has shown how the mobility of the workers, the communities peopled mainly by men, the absence of family life, and the feverish activity of the summers coupled with complete idleness in winter, discouraged attempts to provide the miners with cultural and religious institutions.<sup>6</sup> The major moral problems of the miners were drinking, gambling and prostitution. In Victoria Indians were supplied with liquor and they in turn supplied girls for purposes of prostitution.<sup>7</sup> In the towns, and particularly in Victoria where the miners returned for the winter, drinking became associated with idleness, resulting in rowdyism, crime and personal demoralization. Efforts to organize the miners into a society with at least some degree of stability were not successful before the gold rush ended.

Social conditions which encouraged heavy drinking reappeared in certain areas of British Columbia when construction began on the Canadian Pacific Railway in the 1880's, during the mining and logging activities a decade later, and during the construction of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway and the Pacific Great Eastern Railway early in the twentieth century. Isolated work camps made up almost entirely of men,<sup>8</sup> physically difficult and often dangerous work, and the availability of abundant, cheap liquor at nearby towns to which labourers could escape on days off led to a staggering amount

of drunkenness. Herbert Gowen, an early British Columbian, described Yale during the time of the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

Yale bore at this time a most unenviable reputation. Pay day was signalized by the most fearful riots, with which the all too slender police force was powerless to contend. Drunkenness and disorder filled the place day and night. Fire kindled by lights held in hands unsteady with drink were of almost daily occurrence, the jail was overflowing and the justices weary. Tattered, dirt-bespattered drunkards rolled about the streets, wallowing in the mud, cursing and fighting, and driving all respectable people into the recesses of their homes, while saloon after saloon was added to the number already terribly in excess of the needs of the community.<sup>9</sup>

In such a crude social environment delicate drinking customs did not easily develop. Men drank to get drunk, and the quicker the better. The habit of "bender" drinking on weekends became and has remained a peculiar drinking trait not only in British Columbia but in all of North America as a result of early primitive social conditions.

The heavy drinking disrupted the efficiency and the morale of railway construction crews. Workmen cashed their cheques in saloons and then sometimes would not reappear for days. Towns to which workers went to do their drinking often attracted undesirable and even criminal elements. At Donald, on the CPR line, the Dominion police found that they had to contend with "gamblers and toughs" who lived by getting the "navvies" (construction workers) drunk and then "rolling" them.<sup>10</sup> There were also brawls involving liquor between railway gangs right in the camps where the men lived.<sup>11</sup> The complaints of railway construction foremen and law enforcement

officials finally resulted in a federal enactment proclaiming the railway construction belt a "dry" area, at first twenty, and later forty, miles wide. The legislation was not very successful because the Province of British Columbia objected to this attempt by the federal government to claim police jurisdiction within its boundaries and therefore refused to cooperate in enforcing the "dry" law.<sup>12</sup> The provincial government passed a similar "dry belt" law a few years later when the Grand Trunk Pacific line was being built to Prince Rupert. In any case bootleggers and local brewers of "rock-cut" -- a homebrew in which liquor and a narcotic were combined -- supplied the demand for liquor.<sup>13</sup>

In fast-growing British Columbia communities, it was an understatement to describe social and moral conditions as "wide-open". Many towns, and even established cities like Victoria and Vancouver, had well-known "Red Light" districts. A Presbyterian study of social and moral conditions showed that in many cities police authorities tended to tolerate social vice if it was carried on in segregated areas within or adjacent to cities.<sup>14</sup> The study also gave British Columbia the dubious distinction of permitting more open vice than any other province in Canada. Alan Morley, a newspaper journalist and local historian, claims that in Vancouver a police constable visited city prostitutes monthly to collect a fine or fee and one of the madames promptly called her payments her "sinning license."<sup>15</sup> It was not surprising that in such a social situation a moral reform movement arose.

To a certain extent, the temperance movement was an effort to protect people, particularly the young people, from the consequences of heavy drinking. Consequently, much of the temperance attack was directed at those places where most of the drinking went on -- the saloon and hotel bars, and the "blind pigs."<sup>16</sup> With the influx of the first miners into British Columbia, the liquor bar became an important social institution and, for better or for worse, the only social institution that appeared able to cope with the great numbers of men that crowded into Victoria, Barkerville and other communities. In the early days of many communities, saloon premises were even used for church services, while business went on as usual.<sup>17</sup> One provincial historian found that in the new towns saloons were the most common buildings and usually the first to go up.<sup>18</sup> In the early days of Vancouver, for example, the number of mercantile stores ran a poor third behind saloons and real estate offices and one of the first saloons in town (Deighton House) was reportedly built in twenty-four hours.<sup>19</sup> Many saloons offered facilities for gambling or billiards.<sup>20</sup> In isolated interior communities music or magic acts, or even boxing matches were occasionally provided. Speaking before the Royal Commission on the Liquor Traffic of 1892, John Pawson, a former Nanaimo saloon-keeper, gave an excellent statement on the social function of the saloon in the early days of British Columbia.

In the early days the saloon was like the club. There were at that time none of the home comforts

that are found in the older settled communities, and in fact there were very few of the home comforts that exist at the present time. At that time men lived in cabins and lived roughly. Many of them lived with Indian women, and the consequence was that in the saloon you would hear the latest gossip, for news came but once a week, and there were no telegraphs. So the saloon was a rendezvous for the men to a greater extent than it is now. I do not know that there was more dissipation then than now in the saloon, but there was a different class of people in them at that time. . . . At the present time the population in the country is more steady, and they [saloons] are beginning to feel the influence of domestic life.<sup>21</sup>

Some anti-prohibitionists argued that the saloon was a permanently necessary social meeting place particularly for the men and a valuable social outlet. Prohibitionists replied that if the booze was taken away the fellowship dissolved as well. In any case, the social and gustatory pleasures of the saloon were not without a price and a moment of weakness could quickly add to the hardships of men who often recovered from drinking bouts to find themselves in jail, or injured, or penniless and unemployed, and, depending on religious background, with varying feelings of guilt.

Until 1900, and in some areas for a long time thereafter, hotel and saloon bars remained open twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, and in some towns, like Hazelton in the days of railway construction there, bars were "as busy and humming at night as in the day."<sup>22</sup> Conditions were not much different in the larger cities. When the unwitting Lord and Lady Aberdeen stayed in a New Westminster hotel in October of 1895 they were given a room directly over the bar. Lady Aberdeen recorded that night's experience in her diary.

At 1:15 H.E. [Lord Aberdeen] rang to ask the night porter when the hotel was shut up. "Not at all," was the answer. "When does the bar close?" "Not at all, Sir." However it was further explained that this was only the case at the time of the Fair, when there were absolutely no beds available and when therefore the visiting young men were allowed the use of the bar room for the night. They certainly did use it, but happily the singing and shouting were so continuous that I was finally sung to sleep and woke only to hear the carousal being closed by God Save the Queen shortly after 8 a.m. But as we are the guests of the city on this occasion, we must say nothing.<sup>23</sup>

If saloons served an important social function for the early miners, community leaders found by 1890 that such places were becoming trouble spots. The value of property in the vicinity of a saloon was invariably depressed. Because the business of selling liquor was profitable, a large number of establishments sold it. A newspaperman reported that there was a licensed bar for every thirteen people in New Westminster in 1880 and many unlicensed places.<sup>24</sup> In and around Victoria in 1900 there were over one hundred places, including saloons, hotels, grocery stores and etc. with liquor licenses.

As competition increased, owners of licensed premises were forced to become more aggressive in selling liquor, wine and beer. One observer who travelled across western Canada to study saloons found that in Vancouver and Victoria closing hours were not observed and that drunk persons were served.<sup>25</sup> He also found that many bars became "joints" frequented by drunks and that more and more saloons were avoided by "respectable drinkers" who preferred their drinks at home or at a club.<sup>26</sup> Some saloons also began offering free lunches to attract customers.

As communities grew more settled and developed a community consciousness, reaction set in against wide-open drinking practices. The first concern was for those who became personally demoralized by drink and about 1885, a provincial law was passed whereby a drunkard could be placed under interdict, or "siwashed" as it was popularly known, on application of his next-of-kin or himself, and thereafter it was an offense for anyone to sell him liquor. Considerable pressure was put on saloon owners to keep their places in good order both physically and morally. There was also an effort to ensure that only respectable employees served behind liquor bars and after 1909 all bartenders in Vancouver were licensed annually on the basis of a character reference signed by the chief of police.<sup>27</sup> Around 1890 communities began discriminating against saloons and in favor of hotels by making it almost impossible to secure licenses for new saloon premises.<sup>28</sup> In 1911 a law was passed giving saloon owners three years to wind up their affairs or convert their saloons into hotels, which meant adding as many as thirty rooms to the premises. Other restrictions applied to saloon and hotel bars alike. A Sunday closing law was passed as early as 1891 but it was ineffective since it permitted travellers (anyone who had travelled a distance of at least three miles) to quench their thirst. Nightly closing laws were not much more effective since they did not require bars to be locked in the off hours, nor the lights to be out. The intent of these regulations was finally enforced after new and better-defined laws were passed in 1913.

Temperance workers took the credit for these legal restrictions; however, many of the laws were just as much an expression of a growing community consciousness and a general concern about public morality. It should be made quite clear that the desire to see the establishment of a temperate society and the amelioration of problems connected with drinking was widespread but did not necessarily imply a belief in prohibition. The alternative view to prohibition did not favor a wide-open society in regard to liquor laws but one with moderate and reasonable social and ethical guidelines on questions such as the use of liquor. There were fanatic prohibitionists who would never be satisfied until all liquor had been banished from the province. There were also certain unscrupulous liquor dealers and bootleggers who were equally responsible for keeping the temperance issue alive, because they disobeyed or circumvented all laws aimed at restricting the liquor traffic.

## II

Unsettled social conditions contributed to temperance sentiment in British Columbia as people reacted to the evidence of excessive drinking around them. Temperance sentiment was also fostered by leaders of the Protestant churches who hoped that the church itself, as well as society as a whole, would benefit from temperance laws. In the early years of the twentieth century Protestantism had a degree of influence on the Canadian way of life, indeed, on the Western way of



life, that is difficult to conceive of now. There existed an idealism and a vitality about religion and a confidence among churchmen that the church was the basis of society. "The advantages of Canadian civilization," a Methodist layman stated at a large convention in Toronto in 1909, "come from religion."<sup>29</sup> When church leaders made pronouncements on political and economic issues they received a hearing and churchmen also used their influence to organize opposition against what they termed sinful or disreputable practices. In Victoria, in the 1890's, the Temperance and Moral Reform League was organized, under clerical sponsorship, and put pressure on city council to enforce laws against illicit blind pigs and houses of prostitution that operated openly.<sup>30</sup> A pamphlet sponsored by the Vancouver Ministerial Association and criticizing Premier Richard McBride's land policy caused enough controversy to warrant the holding by the government of a public meeting in Vancouver at which Attorney General W.J. Bowser attempted to refute the charge that the land policy played into the hands of speculators.<sup>31</sup> After 1910, the debate on prohibition grew more intense and the subject received considerable attention in the pulpits of those churches which supported the idea, and the Monday newspapers, especially the World, carried any number of accounts of sermons on prohibition at various churches.

In the minds of the religious leaders, Canada was considered a Christian nation, and consequently the churches expected the people to demonstrate a Christian standard of

ethics. Temperate drinking habits were encouraged by all churches as part of that ethic but total abstinence was stressed mainly by the evangelical denominations -- the Baptist, Congregational, Methodist, and some Presbyterian churches -- and these churches also worked the hardest for prohibition. The evangelical revivals of the nineteenth century and the subsequent rapid spread of Christianity to many parts of the world had given rise to the belief that the moral perfectibility of the individual, and of society, was possible.<sup>32</sup> To many church people it was clear that alcoholic beverages would play no part in a perfect society.

A church, particularly if it was of an evangelical denomination, tended to view its role as that of the guardian of the moral standards of a community. Ministers and laymen cooperated in attacking those people or places in the community environment that tended to put moral temptations in the way of the citizens. Proponents of the social gospel, a movement that was gaining in influence in all the Protestant churches before the war, were dissatisfied with the role of the church as a moral guardian, and they hoped to bring justice to all of Canadian society, by infusing the ethics of Jesus into all the structures and aspects of society.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, many social gospellers, like A.E. Cooke of Vancouver, were willing to support and even lead in the temperance and prohibition movements, since temperance was part of the "master plan" of the social gospel movement. Religious leaders whose aims were more conservative than those of the radical social gospellers, saw

the importance of changing the community environment, but their aim was to eliminate temptations, like saloons, and in this way raise the level of personal life and ethics to a manner of living more pleasing to God.<sup>34</sup> By 1900, many communities had a Moral Reform Council which kept a watchful eye on the moral condition of the town, and reported its observations to city hall and to the press, and did not hesitate to publicly criticize the police force if things appeared to be getting out of hand.<sup>35</sup> Many of the same people who strove for a high community standard of morality, which often included prohibition, also led the drive for juvenile courts and the abolition of child labor, for better conditions in the prisons and for the rehabilitation of former prisoners.<sup>36</sup> In British Columbia, despite an almost complete lack of government or community aid, religious and quasi-religious groups founded schools, hospitals, boarding and recreation centres, and soldiers' aid groups.<sup>37</sup> If a community problem arose, a committee was struck and work to alleviate the need was begun, and the temperance clubs and committees were entirely in keeping with this practice.

Missionary-minded churchmen had another reason for supporting prohibition. In their view, Canada, together with the United States and Great Britain, had been raised up by God to spread Christianity throughout the world.<sup>38</sup> Thus it was important that Canada, as a Christian nation, be a good example to the non-Christian world. If Canada was to be one of the means whereby Christianity was to be spread abroad, it

was imperative, from an ethical point of view, that its own household was kept tidy. "We must view prohibition from the standpoint of a passion for national integrity," stated a prohibitionist in Vancouver.<sup>39</sup>

The churches had gained a solid, influential place on the Canadian social landscape by 1900.<sup>40</sup> However, the kind of rural society on which the church had thrived, the kind of society where everyone went to church and where the church was the pillar of the community, was disappearing, and the churches faced increasingly complex problems as the Canadian economy became more industrial and as people moved to the fast-growing cities. The problems facing the churches were nowhere more acute than in British Columbia. There a hostility "to any conception of a church directed society" had existed since the days of the gold rush.<sup>41</sup> George Moir, who lived in Slocan about the turn of the century, described this experience. A good Methodist, he was on his way to church with his wife, when he "saw a number of men on the street who showed evidence of last night's banquet," and was told, "you church people can all go to hell."<sup>42</sup> The truth was that more and more people, particularly those of the working classes, were staying away from the churches altogether. The religious denominations of British Columbia did become strong in the cities and towns but it was predominantly people of the middle classes -- shopkeepers, professional men, and wealthy businessmen -- that were attached to the churches. "The pews," stated W.H. Smith, later a Presbyterian educator in British Columbia,

"are largely held by the well-to-do classes, and the working man is not made welcome."<sup>43</sup> By 1913 the Protestant churches were informed that over half the adults who were classified as Protestant in the census of 1911 really belonged to no church at all.<sup>44</sup> At the same time it was also disclosed that, except for the Anglican church, the rate of growth of the main denominations, including the Catholic church, had fallen behind the rate of general population growth. Clearly, something had to be done. If churchmen were going to help bring the Kingdom of God to the people of British Columbia, it meant coming to terms with the rapidly growing cities and attracting to their membership the laboring classes who lived there. Clergymen, like W.H. Smith, considered the saloon to be a competitor with the church for the allegiance of the laboring class, and that therefore this institution had to be dealt with.<sup>45</sup> Thus, from the point of view of the Protestant churches, the efforts to apply Christianity to society, and these efforts included prohibition, represented an attempt both to win the allegiance of the unchurched masses and to Christianize their environment.

The evangelical Protestant churches involved themselves in the temperance struggle in British Columbia from the inception of the movement. In fact, the Methodists "held the first public temperance meeting of which there is any record in British Columbia" in New Westminster in 1859.<sup>46</sup> However, for a long time the power of organized religion was hampered because of the unsettled social conditions in the province.

The churches tried to gain a foothold in the various communities so that their religious views could be taught but it was simply impractical to build churches in the midst of a floating population.<sup>47</sup> Not until the turn of the century did the Methodist church have a strong following in British Columbia.<sup>48</sup>

Leaders of all major religious denominations recognized that a social problem existed in regard to the use of alcoholic beverages in British Columbia, but not all of them agreed that prohibition was the solution to the problem. In early British Columbia, the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church, denominations that defined temperance as moderation, gave special heed to the problems connected with the drinking of liquor not only among the Indians, but in other communities as well. Bishop Sillitoe, for example, worked hard and with some success to reduce the number of saloons in New Westminster.<sup>49</sup> He saw the problem in the abuse of alcoholic beverages by drunkenness and bootlegging, not in their moderate use. Those who thought like Bishop Sillitoe, felt that the abuses could be removed by encouragement and example in moderation, by discouraging the "treating" custom, by lessening the number of liquor outlets, and by better law enforcement. As for prohibition, the Anglican General Synod declared its view in 1902 and this position remained relatively unchanged until World War I.

In remedying those [social] evils in one direction, we must be careful lest we create others probably as great in another. Stringent laws often defeat their purpose, and cannot be enforced unless they are supported by the hearty cooperation of all classes.<sup>50</sup>

Methodists, Baptist, Congregationalists and many Presbyterians<sup>51</sup> preferred to define temperance as total abstinence rather than as moderation. In British Columbia most Methodists were certainly teetotalers and as for the recalcitrant few, the Churches were urged to enforce "the Discipline against members who indulge in the use of intoxicating liquors."<sup>52</sup>

At no time did the Presbyterian Church enforce total abstinence on its membership. Rather the practice of total abstinence was commended "to the prayerful consideration of all connected with its congregations, especially the office-bearers thereof."<sup>53</sup> Disciplinary action was taken against communicants who drank excessively but the members of the Canadian Temperance Committee complained that "in some quarters there seems to be a leniency shown to offenders in this respect [intemperance] which would not be shown to persons guilty of other sins equally grave."<sup>54</sup>

Men engaged in the manufacture or trade of alcoholic beverages soon found they were no longer welcome in Methodist and Presbyterian churches. In 1881 the Presbyterian Committee on Temperance reported that feeling against liquor dealers was rising and that any Presbyterians engaged in this traffic be "earnestly counselled" to abandon it.<sup>55</sup> Thus it was that in almost every case brewers like Joseph Loewen of the Victoria - Phoenix Brewery, and Henry Reifel of B.C. Breweries and other businessmen directly or indirectly interested in the liquor traffic like the Tulks and Clarence Marpole of Vancouver, and E.G. Prior of Victoria, attended the Anglican Church.

All churches taught their members the principles of temperance as they understood them. It is doubtful if in the Anglican Church the topic was isolated for special emphasis very often on a Sunday morning but the Church of England Temperance Society encouraged moderate habits among its members and there were 20,000 of them across Canada.<sup>56</sup> The other churches planned and organized temperance instruction to a much greater extent. Education in temperance was particularly directed at the young people of Sunday School age and was often carried out in cooperation with the temperance societies which supplied lecturers, group leaders and unlimited printed material. Thus there were quarterly Sunday School lessons on temperance, quarterly sermons on temperance and quarterly prayer meetings about temperance. An attempt was also made to hold an annual World Temperance Sunday but the effort does not seem to have been successful.

The attitude of the major religious denominations toward prohibition can be summarized as follows.<sup>57</sup> Both the Methodist Church and the Baptist Church unequivocally supported all efforts to curb the liquor traffic or to eliminate it by prohibition. The Presbyterian Church was divided on the question of prohibition, although a large proportion of its membership could always be counted on to vote dry. The Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church, while favoring restrictive liquor legislation, overwhelmingly opposed prohibition. The opposition of the Anglican Church to prohibition was of particular significance because the



denomination occupied a position of strength in British Columbia that was unique in Canada. Along with the prairie provinces, the population of the Pacific province increased rapidly after 1900 but no other province added to its population such a large proportion of English and Scottish immigrants in the years up to 1921.<sup>58</sup> The result was a rapid growth in the membership of the Anglican Church and to a lesser extent, of the Presbyterian Church. By 1921, 31 per cent of the people of British Columbia considered themselves Anglicans and 24 per cent Presbyterians. Twelve per cent called themselves Methodists.<sup>59</sup> Their views on the issue of prohibition differed but the churches did not meet head on in the debate over prohibition, partly because the leadership of organizations on both sides of the question was predominantly in the hands of laymen, and partly because the churches that opposed prohibition could hardly support the liquor traffic.

Much of the temperance support in Methodist, Baptist and Presbyterian Churches of British Columbia, came from the merchants and professional people of the middle class. They were men like the wealthy retailer, David Spencer, a Methodist lay preacher, who gave much support to temperance work in Victoria, and Thomas Houghton, dry goods merchant of the same city, who stated before the Royal Commission in 1892 that "the more sober a community is, the better it is for a business like mine."<sup>60</sup> These men considered their vocation a divine calling and "virtues of thrift, honest, hard work and ambition . . . proofs of salvation, and prosperity was welcomed fondly as a

mark of providential favour."<sup>61</sup> As this moral-economic outlook became more widespread among people of the middle class, reputation and respectability became important and this importance contained a built-in factor working in favour of shunning alcoholic beverages completely. A merchant who was an abstainer himself but sold the product might still find himself in trouble with his own class because the women and friends of the <sup>X</sup>Woman's Christian Temperance Union were encouraged to boycott those grocery stores that sold liquor. In Victoria, a doctor claimed that people -- especially the parson and his friends -- boycotted him because he attacked the temperance stand of the church. "Joining the church is considered a good business move anywhere," he added.<sup>62</sup> Businessmen's wives, through their Councils of Women used their influence to support temperance by opposing the sale of liquor at public events like fall fairs, and on at least one occasion in Victoria, the city mayor was forced to come to terms with them.<sup>63</sup>

As community leaders and taxpayers, businessmen from the Methodist and Presbyterian churches were concerned with social problems in their vicinity, but they tended to view the solutions to such problems in moral and individualistic terms. The businessmen were ready to support the social gospel movement as long as it pressed for laws regulating theatres, cigarettes or liquor but they distrusted a broader emphasis which was also denounced by prominent evangelists like D.L. Moody and Billy Sunday as unbiblical and socialistic.

The social gospel appeared to mix business and religion and was downright critical of a system which the businessmen found profitable. When H.H. Stevens, a Methodist and a Conservative member of parliament, spoke to a businessmen's prohibition banquet in Vancouver, he urged that in addition to prohibition something be done to remove the causes of drunkenness among workmen who were forced to work long hours at unhealthy occupations. The speech was interrupted by some of those in attendance who felt simple prohibition laws were sufficient cure for the majority of social problems.<sup>64</sup> By placing the blame for practically all poverty and crime in the community on liquor, the businessmen were able to maintain their middle class values while at the same time contributing to what they were certain was an important movement in the direction of social improvement.

### III

The churches of British Columbia were complemented in their efforts to promote temperance by numerous temperance societies. Already during gold rush days, Americans from California brought with them a total-abstinence society called the Dashaway Association. These societies represented an alternative for those who wanted to avoid the saloon environment and also served other social purposes for the members. Temperance societies operated outside of denominational controls but most of them had the full blessing of the churches and drew their membership from temperance-minded church people. Although the main emphasis of the temperance

societies was supposedly on the encouragement of total abstinence among club members and prohibition in the state, social and practical benefits were provided as well. The Scottish Temperance league was as much concerned with tradition as with temperance. Only the Good Templars claimed to be exclusively a temperance organization. The Royal Templars operated a mutual benefit fund from which heirs of deceased members received a kind of insurance of about \$2,000 and the Sons of Temperance also gave mutual help to members. With thousands of members across Canada, these financial aid plans were fairly secure and attractive. A number of prominent British Columbians joined these societies and many of the Good Templars in Victoria were described before the Royal Commission on the Liquor Traffic, 1892, as "men who occupied good positions in the city."<sup>65</sup> Most of the temperance societies appeared to be self-centred, respectable clubs, with no political aims.

The Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was brought into British Columbia by Francis Willard herself in 1883, and under her guidance a local WCTU was begun and the framework for a provincial organization was set up.<sup>66</sup> The WCTU movement did not spread very quickly in British Columbia until after 1900 and by 1915 the organization claimed 1400 members in 58 Unions spread throughout the province.<sup>67</sup> From the beginning the WCTU was a very active organization and worked hard for certain kinds of social welfare legislation, for moral reform, and for moral and temperance instruction in schools.

Temperance societies both in and out of the churches were very anxious to have what was termed scientific temperance instruction placed into the British Columbia public school curriculum and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union began petitioning the government to this end as early as 1886. By scientific temperance instruction was meant the teaching of total abstinence, and although the societies never succeeded in having it introduced as a standard course equivalent to other academic subjects, before long teachers were permitted to teach the subject if they wished. The texts used were A.B. Palmer's The Temperance Teachings of Science and Dr. Richardson's Public School Temperance, both of which stressed total abstinence. In 1893 the provincial superintendent of education wrote to the Presbyterian Temperance Committee that the

teaching of Physiology and Hygiene in the Public Schools receives careful attention, and I have reason to believe that the teachers as a body do not neglect to give instructions on the subject of Temperance.<sup>68</sup>

In general, it can be said that the temperance societies did not play more than a minor role in the coming of prohibition to British Columbia. Society memberships were never large -- in 1912 Dr. D. Spencer, a prohibitionist, estimated that the total number of members in the major temperance societies in British Columbia was 3500<sup>69</sup> -- and as social clubs they lacked the single-minded determination and effort necessary if prohibition was to become a reality. There were sporadic efforts to carry temperance work into politics. In

Vancouver, in 1890, it was proposed to set up a joint stock company in order to raise funds for a temperance building to be called "Temperance Hall" from which temperance people wanted "to carry on a more systematic and aggressive work than has heretofore been possible" but the building plan fizzled out.<sup>70</sup>

After 1907 the societies provided services, personnel, and above all funds for the political pressure groups -- the Local Option League and the People's Prohibition Association.

#### IV

Unsettled social and economic conditions in British Columbia caused social problems in the area of morality, and excessive drinking was one of the most serious of these problems. The many saloons and liquor outlets were loosely controlled and there was considerable bootlegging. Consequently a movement began toward moral reform. Early temperance feeling expressed itself in the coming of temperance societies and restrictive liquor legislation. As the churches grew stronger in the developing province, they gave further encouragement to the temperance movement. The evangelical denominations -- the Baptist, Methodist, and Congregational churches -- looked on the saloon as the specific cause of many individual and family hardships and therefore wanted it eliminated. Prohibitionists in British Columbia were respected middle class people who were also members of the evangelical churches and many of them occupied prominent positions in the religious, business and political life of the

province. However the prohibitionists were outnumbered by the Anglicans, Roman Catholics and the many Presbyterians who believed in the moderate use of alcoholic beverages and their conviction was supported by the growing group of people who had no religious affiliations at all. Many opponents of prohibition supported temperance through restrictive liquor legislation and it was not easy for prohibitionists to convince them that prohibition represented the wave of the future and not a Methodist tyranny. The social, political and economic conditions that followed the outbreak of war in 1914 made prohibition possible in the province.

## NOTES ON CHAPTER I

1. See M.A. Garland and J.J. Talman, "Pioneer Drinking Habits and the Rise of the Temperance Agitation in Upper Canada Prior to 1840," reprinted 1931 from the Ontario Historical Society's "Papers and Records," XXVII. W.R. Riddell also contributed several articles on this subject in Ontario and J.K. Chapman has written one on New Brunswick.

2. H.H. Walsh, The Christian Church in Canada (Toronto: Ryerson, 1956), pp. 165-6.

3. W. Elgee, The Social Teachings of the Canadian Churches, Protestant, the Early Period, before 1850 (Toronto: Ryerson, 1964), p. 154.

4. Robert E. Popham and Wolfgang Schmidt, comps., Statistics of Alcohol Use and Alcoholism in Canada 1871-1956 (1st Report of Alcoholism Research Foundation, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1958), pp. 15-24.

5. Cited in F.W. Howay and E.O.S. Scholefield, British Columbia from the Earliest Times to the Present (4 vols.; Vancouver: S.J. Clarke, 1914), I, 532.

6. S.D. Clark, The Social Development of Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1942), pp. 308-379. Clark says that most of the miners expected their mining experience to be short-lived and looked on it as a "grand spree". The "temptation to enjoy life to the full tended to be overwhelming, and defeated any desire to establish enduring social relationships and institutions for the future." Ibid., p. 309.

7. Ibid., pp. 342-3; see also Thomas Crosby, Up and Down the North Pacific by Canoe and Mission Ship (Toronto: Methodist Missionary Society, 1914), pp. 16, 17, 85.

8. Men greatly outnumbered women particularly before World War I and this fact contributed significantly to the social condition of the province. British Columbia had a higher proportion of men than women in its population than any other province at this time. The number of men to 100 women was 148 in 1881, 177 in 1901 and 127 in 1921. The Canadian average as a whole in these years was 102, 105 and 106, respectively. See Census of Canada, 1951, X, Table 16, p. 10. The leaders of social institutions were fully aware of this condition and expressed concern about it. Protestant clergymen saw the lack of family life as a cause of religious indifference among the miners. See the comments of the Anglican Bishop of Columbia in the Daily Colonist (Victoria), Mar. 14, 1861, cited in S.D. Clark, Social Development . . . , p. 373.



9. H. Gowen, Church Work in British Columbia (London: Longmans, Green, 1899), p. 45. ]

10. S.B. Steele, Forty Years in Canada (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1915), p. 194. Steele was a member of the North West Mounted Police.

11. In one such instance, a concrete gang fought with the teamsters over some liquor that had disappeared. See George Bolton, "Work and Adventures in the Crowsnest Pass," Alberta Historical Review, II (1954), Part 2, p. 31.

12. Steele, p. 233. See also an official report by Inspector G.E. Sanders of the North West Mounted Police, 1898, in Clark, Social Development . . ., p. 406.

13. Bootleggers skillfully concealed liquor destined for the dry areas. In one case tin containers shaped like Bibles were used. Testimony of T.F. McGuigan, formerly of Donald, before the Royal Commission of 1892. See Royal Commission on the Liquor Traffic, 1892. Minutes of Evidence (6 vols.; Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, Queen's Printer, 1894), III, 613.

14. Edward A. Christie, "The Official Attitudes and Opinions of the Presbyterian Church in Canada with Respect to Public Affairs and Social Problems 1875-1925." (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Dept. of History, University of Toronto, 1955), pp. 50-3.

15. Alan Morley, Vancouver: From Milltown to Metropolis (Vancouver: Mitchell Press, 1961), p. 91.

16. The name given to unlicensed and illegal liquor outlets.

17. Clark, Social Development . . ., p. 371. For the personal experience of Rev. Charles Gordon (Ralph Connor) in such a situation see Mervyn E. Kennedy, "The History of Presbyterianism in British Columbia, 1861-1925." (Unpublished M.A. thesis, Dept. of History, University of British Columbia, 1938), p. 103.

18. Art Downs, Wagon Road North: The Story of the Cariboo Gold Rush in Historical Photos (Quesnel, B.C.: Northwest Digest, 1960), p. 59.

19. See Morley, p. 35, and Patricia E. Roy, "Railways, Politicians and the Development of the City of Vancouver as a Metropolitan Centre 1886-1929." (Unpublished M.A. thesis, Dept. of History, University of Toronto, 1963), p. 25.

20. Gambling was legally permitted in saloons until 1899.

21. Royal Commission, III, 584.

22. Frederick A. Talbot, The New Garden of Canada, by Pack-Horse and Canoe Through Undeveloped New British Columbia (London: Carrell and Company, 1911), p. 273.

23. John T. Saywell, ed., The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen 1893-1898 (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1960), p. 185.

24. Columbian (New Westminster), Centennial Edition, Aug. 12, 1964, p. 11.

25. Elliott Flower, "Liquor and the Law," Canada Monthly XII (No. 2, n.d.) 83-6. Copy at Public Archives of British Columbia (PABC).

26. Ibid., p. 85.

27. Vancouver Daily Province, Dec. 15, 1909, p. 20.

28. Prospective saloon licensees were required to obtain the signatures of two thirds of the residents in the immediate area and in any case the number of licenses issued was related to population and in many areas the population had to increase by 1000 persons before a new license application was even considered.

29. Canada's Missionary Congress (Toronto: Canadian Council, Laymen's Missionary Movement, 1909), p. 252.

30. Daily Colonist (Victoria), Dec. 18, 1890, p. 1.

31. Margaret Ormsby, British Columbia: a History (Macmillans in Canada, 1968), p. 387.

32. For a good discussion of the idea of perfectibility and post-millennialism see James H. Timberlake, Prohibition and the Progressive Movement 1900-1920 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963), pp. 34-8.

33. A.R. Allen, "The Crest and Crisis of the Social Gospel in Canada 1916-1927." (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Dept. of History, Duke University, 1966), p. 11. In B.C. the Methodists R.J. McIntyre and Ernest Thomas were strong exponents of the social gospel. A.E. Cooke, a prominent Vancouver Congregationalist, and Dean L.N. Tucker of the Church of England also supported the movement.

34. Allen, p. 13.

35. In Vancouver, H.H. Stevens was secretary of the Moral Reform Assoc. for a time and frequently visited city hall to report on bawdy houses or bootleg joints. The Ministerial Association in New Westminster called a meeting with the police force in 1906 and put pressure on the force

to keep better control of the moral conditions of the city. See Vancouver Daily Province, Nov. 23, 1906, p. 19.

36. The Salvation Army was engaged in this work.

37. The Methodists founded Coqualeetza, an Indian school; the WCTU established the first maternity hospital on the mainland, at New Westminster and also orphanages; YMCA's and YWCA's were also community efforts of social-moral betterment. It should be added that these organizations often overreached their financial resources and when they ran out of funds they invariably came to the government for aid, and usually received it.

38. There was a belief that the task of world evangelization could be completed in one generation. . . . Missionary Congress, p. 304. All major Protestant denominations in Canada supported this missionary program. See ibid., p. v.

39. World (Vancouver), May 19, 1915, p. 12. See also Presbyterian Church, Pre-Assembly Congress (Toronto: Board of Foreign Missions, 1913), p. 262.

40. S.D. Clark, Church and Sect in Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1948), pp. 329-67.

41. Walsh, The Christian Church . . ., p. 249.

42. George Moir, "Sinners and Saints. A true story of early days in the farthest West, by an Old Timer," (Victoria, mimeographed, 1947), p. 108.

43. W.H. Smith, The Church and Men (New York and Baltimore: Broadway Publishing, 1910), p. 45. See also Clark, Church and Sect . . ., pp. 368-424. The alienation of the working class from the church was also discussed at the Pre-Assembly Congress of the Presbyterian Church in 1913. "What is the dominant note often heard in the aggressive work of the Church? Is it not this: Multitudes of the working masses have deserted the Church; we must get them back again." Pre-Assembly Congress, pp. 218-19.

44. Rev. Charles Gordon estimated that from the 4,370,000 persons listed in the census of 1911 as Protestant, 2,623,077 were adults and of these only 1,111,250 were actual church members. See Pre-Assembly Congress, p. 89.

45. "The saloon is . . . universally regarded as the worst enemy of the Church and the highest life of man." W.H. Smith The Church and Men (New York and Baltimore: Broadway Publishing, 1910), p. 54.

46. Ebenezer Robson, How Methodism Came to British Columbia (Toronto: Methodist Mission Rooms, 1904), p. 10.

47. Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist church leaders alike felt that the religious and moral work of their churches was being neglected in British Columbia and as a result the churches reorganized synod jurisdictions in an attempt to bolster their work in the province. Denominations also directed their efforts at each other and sometimes this "competition" resulted in mutual ill feeling. See Walsh, pp. 271-4 and Clark, Social Development . . ., pp. 375-6.

48. The leading Methodists of B.C. generally came from Ontario. During the goldrush many immigrants came to B.C. from the U.S. and Canada and among them were numerous "Methodists and sons of Methodists." Both the American and Canadian Methodist churches showed interest in providing ministers for the mining communities and Ontario Methodists quickly sent a "pioneer band" of three men -- Revs. Browning, Robson and White. After this time B.C. remained a "mission district" of the Toronto Methodist Conference until 1887 and personnel continued to come from the east. See E.A. Davis, ed., Commemorative Review of the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational Churches in British Columbia (Vancouver: Joseph Lee, 1925), pp. 1-8; 63-71. Laymen who became temperance leaders in B.C. -- H.H. Stevens, R.D. Rorison, Dr. George Telford, and D.S. Curtis -- belonged mainly to the Methodist Church, and had emigrated from Ontario. However, Jonathan Rogers and David Spencer, both prominent businessmen, prohibitionists and Methodists, came to B.C. directly from Britain.

49. Gowen, Church Work in British Columbia, p. 81.

50. Church of England, General Synod, Journal of Proceedings 1902, p. 191.

51. By 1881 it was estimated that half the Presbyterians in Canada were total abstainers. See Presbyterian Church, General Assembly, Acts and Proceedings, 1881, p. cxli.

52. Methodist Church, B.C. Conference, Minutes of Proceedings, 1890, p. 26.

53. Presbyterian Church, General Assembly, Acts and Proceedings, 1878, p. 52.

54. Ibid., 1881, p. cxli.

55. Ibid.

56. J.N. Stearns, Temperance in All Nations (New York: National Temperance Society and Publication House, 1893), p. 174.

57. The Methodist, Baptist and Presbyterian churches all recorded resolutions in favor of prohibition before 1900. The Methodist Church passed a Prohibition resolution at the First General Conference of the Methodist Church of Canada, 1874. The Presbyterian resolution was passed in 1881 but without total agreement, and with dissenting opinion marked in the Minutes. The Baptist Churches of B.C. and northwestern United States held a convention in Vancouver around 1890 and passed a prohibition resolution at that time.

58. The population of B.C. was 178,657 in 1901 of which 59% were British. By 1921 the population had increased to 524,582 of which 75% were British. During the same period in Canada as a whole, the proportion of British people in Canada decreased from 60% to 56%. See Census of Canada, 1921, I, Table 23, pp. 354-5. The percentage figures are my work.

59. In Canada as a whole, the Anglican Church and Presbyterian Church each claimed 16% of the population and the Methodist Church 13%. See Census of Canada, 1951, X, Table 36, 1-4. The census figures are very deceptive, however, for the totals included children and non-church members. The census figures showed 65,019 Methodists in B.C. in 1921 while actual church membership in 1920 was only 15,768.

60. Royal Commission, III, 520.

61. Stewart Crysdale, The Industrial Struggle and Protestant Ethics in Canada (Toronto: Ryerson, 1961), p. xii.

62. E. Stevenson, Religion and Rum (Victoria: Cohen & Salmon, 1885), pp. 23-25.

63. See Victoria Daily Times, Sept. 5, 1907, pp. 2, 4 and Nov. 23, 1907, p. 12.

64. World (Vancouver), May 19, 1915, p. 12.

65. Royal Commission, III, 586. R.D. Rorison, a wealthy Vancouver businessman, was a Good Templar.

66. See pamphlet Woman's Christian Temperance Union of British Columbia Golden Jubilee 1883-1933 (Vancouver, 1933) and Colonist (Victoria), July 4, 1883.

67. Woman's Christian Temperance Union of British Columbia, Yearbook, 1915, p. 32.

68. Presbyterian Church, General Assembly, Acts and Proceedings, 1893, Appendix 29, p. xiii.

69. F.S. Spence, ed., The Campaign Manual (Toronto: Pioneer Office, 1912), p. 73.

70. Temperance Hall Association (Vancouver: 1890), "Temperance Hall Assoc." docket, PABC.

## CHAPTER II

### THE COMING OF PROHIBITION

A strong political pressure group representing temperance sentiment in the province did not appear in British Columbia until 1908 when the Local Option League came into existence. This fact underscores the absence of any well-organized prohibition feeling before that time. In most of the eastern provinces the prohibition movement began earlier and there the Dominion Alliance for the Suppression of the Liquor Traffic was a powerful organization as early as 1878.<sup>1</sup> A provincial branch of the Dominion Alliance was organized in British Columbia before 1900 but never received enough support either from headquarters in Toronto or from within the province to carry on continuous or effective political action.

The federal prohibition plebiscite of 1898 was held mainly because of the influence of eastern temperance organization and even the fact that the people of British Columbia voted in favor of prohibition by a narrow majority was hardly due to an organized temperance effort in the province. The state of temperance work prior to the plebiscite was described by a churchman as one of "masterly inactivity."<sup>2</sup> Victoria, headquarters of the WCTU and a long-time centre of Templar activity, actually voted against prohibition, as did Nanaimo which contained the lodges of three different temperance societies.

The Dominion returning officer stated in his report that, on the whole, Canadians were apathetic to the prohibition plebiscite because only 44 per cent of the electorate bothered to vote.<sup>3</sup> In British Columbia, voters showed even less interest in the question than did Canadians elsewhere. Of the 35,537 persons on the voters list, less than a third cast ballots and the vote was in favor of prohibition by under 1000 votes. In Vancouver those who voted favored prohibition by 1029 votes to 578 but 4400 voters ignored the polls. Apathy on the part of the majority obviously played into the hands of dedicated prohibitionists who were able to carry the vote practically by default.

Small as the vote in British Columbia was in 1898, the fact that the people of the province came out in favor of prohibition surprised many people for, as the Colonist put it, "nearly everyone has hitherto put British Columbia in the anti-prohibition column."<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, it could not be expected that the British Columbia government would take the plebiscite very seriously, and certainly the federal government, in view of the anti-prohibition vote in Quebec, was unwilling to pursue the matter further.

In the meantime strong temperance organizations in provinces other than British Columbia were pressing demands for prohibition at the provincial and local level. Already in 1878, the Canada Temperance Act or Scott Act, as it was called, had provided for prohibition in federal electoral divisions by local option.<sup>5</sup> The Act allowed that on petition of at least 25 per cent of the eligible voters in any electoral division a

vote on prohibition of the sale of liquor would be held and if carried by simple majority, prohibition in that area would remain in force for at least three years after which time another vote could be taken if it was properly petitioned. The Scott Act was widely implemented in all eastern provinces but it was soon discovered that the Act was not equally well adapted to the licensing practices as they were carried out in each province. Furthermore, provincial cooperation in the enforcement of such a federal enactment was less than enthusiastic particularly when local prohibition meant not only the expense of policing but a loss of license revenue as well. Premier Oliver Mowat of Ontario was always quick to challenge what he considered to be an encroachment by the federal government into an area of provincial jurisdiction, and when the federal government attempted to go beyond the merely restrictive laws of the Scott Act and assumed the responsibility for the granting of retail liquor licenses across Canada through the McCarthy Act of 1883, Mowat took the issue to court. He was simply opposed to any federal legislation that would "rob him of liquor licensing and all the patronage that went with it."<sup>6</sup>

The desire on the part of the provinces to keep control of retail liquor licensing coupled with the demand of temperance organizations for provincial local option laws or amendments to the Scott Act led to legislative action at a number of levels that totally confused the jurisdictional situation. It took a series of court cases, a number of which advanced to the



Privy Council, to thrash out the extent of local, provincial and federal jurisdiction in the area of liquor laws. The principle "that the provinces also might pass laws dealing with the regulation and prohibition of the sale of liquors so far as not to conflict with Dominion legislation on this matter" was established in 1896.<sup>7</sup> A provincial prohibition act that was taken to court and found in 1902 to be within the requirements permitted for a provincial Act was the Manitoba Liquor Act and this Act became a standard reference for all subsequent provincial liquor legislation. 1796

Prohibition now became a matter of provincial concern. Interested persons were kept informed of the progress of prohibition throughout Canada and the United States through newspapers and religious magazines but the prohibitionists in each province, while given the moral support of the evangelical churches across Canada, were left pretty well to their own resources when it came to initiating and organizing political action. By the time the Local Option League of British Columbia began demanding a provincial local option act, the extent of provincial jurisdiction was pretty well defined and the people of the province had been saved the effort and the expense of finding the necessary legal definitions. The other provinces experimented with local option laws more suitable to local needs or obtained amendments to the Scott Act to reduce local option areas to more manageable proportions like cities, towns, townships or municipalities instead of electoral divisions or whole counties. By 1907 every province, including

Quebec, had some kind of operative local option law, except British Columbia. It was possible to revise the Scott Act to suit British Columbia but this was not done nor was any pressure put on the government in Ottawa through provincial members of parliament for such a revision.

After 1900, the idea of popular control, implicit in local option legislation, began to have a wide appeal in British Columbia but the idea was opposed by the Conservative government. Flagrant violations of existing liquor laws gained support for the idea of local control as a possible means to combat bootlegging while to prohibitionists local control meant a better opportunity to introduce local option. The local option movement grew out of a popular feeling against bootlegging and poorly run saloons. In Victoria, for example, conditions had become so bad that an editorial condemning all saloons appeared in the Colonist, a newspaper that at no time supported the prohibition, even at the local level. The editorial was entitled "Public Nuisances" and in it saloons were severely criticized because in many of them "orgies" occurred "at all hours of day and night." "The people themselves ought to be given the right to say whether or not they will have saloons," the editorial concluded.<sup>8</sup> The problem was that though the revenue from liquor licenses went to the organized municipalities or towns, the actual granting of the licence was done by provincially appointed license commissioners. Any attempt by municipal councils or private citizens to improve social conditions by placing restrictions on licensed premises

were stymied because the ultimate coercive power of license cancellation was out of municipal hands. Municipalities attempted to keep down the number of saloons by raising license fees but there was a limit to this practice and there existed the danger of playing into the hands of bootleggers.<sup>9</sup> Citizens came out in droves in places like the Fairview area of South Vancouver, in Abbotsford and in Chilliwack, to protest the granting of retail liquor licenses in their areas, but to no avail. Dissatisfied people of Victoria organized a "Citizens League" and asked the provincial government to appoint license commissioners who would heed their city council.<sup>10</sup> In Vancouver early in 1906, Mayor Buscombe met with the license commissioners to discuss the enforcement of liquor laws in the city and among other discouraging reports a letter from the Hotel and Saloon-Keepers Protective Association was read in which it was charged that extensive bootlegging went on in at least seventy-five unlicensed houses.<sup>11</sup> In the face of such social conditions Mayor A.I. Morley of Victoria engaged in a long and unsuccessful struggle to enforce nightly closing on saloons and to have their premises improved. Nevertheless, any attempt by municipalities to interfere with the appointment of license or police commissioners (the latter were also provincially appointed) was resisted by the provincial government. When Mayor Morley urged the Premier to give his city the right to elect license and police commissioners and to have a say in the granting of retail licenses, he was told that these actions were considered the prerogative of the Conservative Party.<sup>12</sup>

The provincial government thus admitted the importance of liquor licensing as a piece of political patronage. Municipal administrators met at Kamloops in 1906 and one of the chief items discussed was the problem of the control of liquor licenses. It was decided that the "permanency" of licenses should be ended, and that the municipalities should be given the right to enforce local regulations, including the power to suspend licenses for noncompliance with by-laws.<sup>13</sup>

By 1906, then, there was a good deal of popular support for local control of the liquor traffic. In Victoria, an overflowing audience attended a meeting sponsored by the Royal Templars of Temperance and supported the call for reducing the number of saloon licenses and eliminating liquor licenses altogether in grocery stores.<sup>14</sup> In March of the same year J.N. Evans, the Cowichan member in the legislature, moved to amend the Municipal Act so that 25 per cent of the electors of a municipality could petition for reduction of the number of retail liquor licenses. The motion, even though it represented but a mild form of local control, was rejected.

To temperance leaders, the signs of the times indicated that a drive for local option legislation could not fail to attract widespread support. One of the first organizations to support the local option cause was the Christian Endeavour Society which by 1908 had about 5000 members in British Columbia, recruited chiefly from the evangelical Protestant churches.<sup>15</sup> Miss Ada L. Murcutt of London, England arrived in 1907 and began a tour of the province presenting illustrated

lectures wherever she went. She came at the invitation of the WCTU, and her lectures in favor of local option created a great deal of interest.<sup>16</sup> A revitalized WCTU, aided by the other temperance societies, began a campaign to secure the signature of every man in the province on a petition favoring local option. A provincial election was set for early in 1907 and suddenly, twelve days before voting day, the Dominion Alliance decided to try and make local option an election issue. R.D. Rorison, secretary of the provincial branch of the Dominion Alliance, and a prosperous businessman, tried to persuade election candidates to sign or pledge their support for a local option law at the next legislative session.<sup>17</sup> The Dominion Alliance hoped that in advertising the stand of the various candidates on this issue, temperance people would be able to vote more intelligently, and that, in any case, the increased pressure on the government might result in local option legislation in the near future. Provincial temperance people like H.H. Stevens opposed this action by the Dominion Alliance on the grounds that it was too late to influence the election campaign and that local option should not be made a political issue in this manner.<sup>18</sup> Rorison's activities were ineffective and the drive for local option legislation reverted back to provincial temperance leaders.

The work for local option was continued by the WCTU with an enthusiasm that was contagious. H.S. Magee of the Department of Temperance and Moral Reform of the Methodist Church spent some time in British Columbia early in 1908 to help

sustain the interest and the Presbyterian Church supported local option as well. Citizens' Committees worked actively for local option legislation in various provincial centres including Victoria, New Westminster, Langley and Fernie. As support across the province grew, local optionists decided to hold a convention in Vancouver on November 25, 1908. Delegates from all over the province attended the convention and cooperated to form the Local Option League. To maintain a cooperative spirit, it was decided at the outset that the emphasis for supporting local option should be on citizenship and not on religious affiliation.<sup>19</sup> The League admitted to membership anyone who favored local option "irrespective of race, creed or political affiliation" and resolved to promote local option legislation through petitions to the Legislature and by "education of the people in temperance reform."<sup>20</sup> E.B. Morgan, a Vancouver insurance and real estate broker, was elected president of the League and other leading prohibitionists were chosen to work with him. In addition, an Advisory Council was formed, which was to include presidents of all regional Local Option Leagues in the province, presidents of the temperance societies, and the chief officers of all religious denominations including the Anglican Church (represented by the Bishop of Columbia) and the Roman Catholic Church (represented by the Archbishop). The Advisory Council had little authority but added a good deal of prestige to the Local Option League. The presence of the Anglican Bishop and the Catholic Archbishop on the Advisory Council gave the League moral support but neither the Anglicans nor the Catholics ever

considered themselves in the prohibitionist camp. After the demise of the League the Catholic Church was again invited to join the executive of the People's Prohibition Association, but it refused.

The League provided an effective and theologically neutral organization in which the churches could cooperate on a political problem, thus avoiding the public opposition that direct church involvement might invite. The League also made it possible to involve gifted lay people in a moral cause. Thus the president was a prominent Vancouver businessman, although the main work of keeping the League functioning fell on a clergyman who became superintendent of the League -- Rev. Dr. Daniel Spencer, a Baptist minister from Victoria.

The Local Option League appeared to hold to the basic assumptions of the liberal reform movement; i.e., if the members of a community were given democratic control of their institutions particularly by making all administrative and executive posts elective, not only would the people be more satisfied because they, the people, would be in political control, but society as a whole would be morally improved because the people would see to it that injustices were removed.<sup>21</sup>

Specifically, the local optionists stood for the right of all the people of a community to vote on whether or not saloon and hotel bars should be allowed to exist in any given area, to elect license commissioners, and for the right of electors to petition against arbitrary decisions of license commissioners. It was not difficult for reform-minded people who were not

necessarily prohibitionists to cooperate with a movement that appeared to fit in with other liberal reform ideas like woman suffrage and the removal of the political patronage system.

One could be for local option legislation without necessarily being for prohibition simply because such legislation would let the people be the choosers in local affairs. The participation of certain prominent businessmen in local option and its endorsement by the provincial Liberal Party can be explained in this light.

Although associated with social reform, it is easy to label the prohibitionists as intolerant because in reality, they felt responsible to the wishes of the majority only so long as the vote favored their view. The apparent intolerance can be explained, if not justified, as a supreme self-confidence possessed by all reformers in the good their particular reform will bring to individuals and to society. Therefore, the people should be allowed to choose but there could be no doubt as to how they would choose -- they would choose local option or prohibition. If a vote went against prohibition as it did in local option contests in Chilliwack and Prince Rupert in 1910, the defeat was explained not as the people's verdict but as a conspiracy between the liquor interests and a few corrupt (probably non-elective) officials. Ruth Spence's book interprets failure after failure of the prohibition movement in this light as does a good deal of the prohibition literature in the United States. Spence is also very definite that the politicians who pursued righteousness; i.e., prohibition, did not suffer for it. If a political party supported prohibition and



was elected, as was the case with the federal Liberals in 1896, Spence writes that the "friends of temperance . . . assisted materially in the sweeping Liberal victory."<sup>22</sup> If the party supporting prohibition lost, as did the British Columbia Liberals in 1912, Spence writes that "it is possible that local option had nothing at all to do with the defeat."<sup>23</sup> The conspiracy theory to explain setbacks provided an excellent defense mechanism for prohibitionists. "Setbacks," wrote one Canadian prohibitionist, "are not inconsistent with the onward march of things."<sup>24</sup> The temperance people had decided long since that the Lord was on their side and so the only way to consider a defeat was in temporary terms and usually at the hands of the devil himself. Prohibitionists could agree with Billy Sunday when he said that the liquor traffic was belched up from the pit of hell.<sup>25</sup>

A vigorous LOL drove straight toward its goal of obtaining option legislation. In early February, 1909, when the League sent a delegation of about 150 persons to the provincial government, fifty branches of the League already existed in many parts of the province and this number grew to seventy before the year was out. The delegation carried a petition favoring a local option law signed by 10,000 electors and 25,000 other persons and also a draft bill of a local option law.<sup>26</sup> Supporters of the League also sent in private letters and petitions to individual members of the Legislature. In a brochure entitled "Temperance People, Wake Up!" Superintendent Spencer encouraged local option supporters to become involved in politics by

helping to nominate candidates favorable to local option and by voting for them.<sup>27</sup> Spencer also urged church ministers to make statements in support of local option.

There is a great opportunity for Christian service today in regard to the local option movement. . . . Be a moral reformer. Lend a hand in the service of God and humanity in this great modern crusade.<sup>28</sup>

In a report Spencer stated that canvassers had found that ninety per cent of the people favored a local option law.<sup>29</sup> The LOL had become a pressure group that could not easily be ignored by the government and Premier Richard McBride made the quick promise of a plebiscite on the question.

Anti-prohibitionist interests could not afford to ignore the League either. Throughout these years, anti-prohibition leadership was, understandably, given by people directly connected with the liquor traffic. At the same time it should not be thought that the "wets", as they were called, opposed every restriction placed on their business. Many saloon and hotel keepers supported large increase in license fees, or high license, as this policy was called, because they felt such a policy would raise the standards of their business both in service and facilities, and decrease competition.<sup>30</sup> In 1906 members of the Vintners Association lobbied in the legislature in support of a law that would limit, in proportion to population, the number of licenses issued in municipalities.<sup>31</sup> It was also rumoured that the Licensed Vintners were behind the push to remove liquor licenses from grocery stores and clubs. However, the wets strongly opposed local option. Two organizations -- the Licensed Victuallers Association and the Provincial Vintner's

Association -- were quick to respond to the threat to their business posed by local option and these associations began using the same tactics to influence the government as those used by the LOL. The retailers and the brewers emphasized that local option would only create more bootlegging. They demanded that at least a 60% majority should be required for a vote to carry if the referendum were held.<sup>32</sup>

These men not only lobbied against local option, they also went directly into politics themselves. A.E. Watts, president of the Cranbrook Conservative Association, complained to McBride in a letter that "a small clique composed of liquor men -- have usurped the functions and rights of the [local conservative] Executive", and that this "clique" was forcing its will in the choice of candidates for both party nomination and patronage positions.<sup>33</sup> The liquor traffic had not experienced any decline in demand despite the increasingly restrictive laws on hours of sale or the closing down of saloons. There were 35 breweries in the province in 1902 and up until 1912 at least

distilling and brewing showed fair progress, the victories of the friends of prohibition not balancing the growth of thirsty cities and the coming of immigrants from beer-loving lands.<sup>34</sup>

Yet, well aware of what was happening elsewhere in Canada, the Vintners held a convention in January, 1909, and forwarded a resolution to Premier McBride requesting that there be no change in the Liquor License Act as it would be "unjust for this Government to deal with the vested rights of licenses properly without first having been made an issue of in the previous election in this province."<sup>35</sup>

There was no need for the anti-prohibitionists to become unduly concerned. The LOL leaders were inexperienced in political tactics and the Conservative government of Premier McBride, probably doubting that the League had widespread support, outwitted them rather badly in this first prohibition campaign. J. Hawthornthwaite, Socialist member from Nanaimo, intimated that local option support was not much beyond petition strength; i.e. ten per cent of the voters, and McBride probably agreed with him for he supported Hawthornthwaite's motion to appoint a Royal Commission to investigate the Gothenburg System with a view to implementing it in British Columbia.<sup>36</sup> The motion passed but was never carried out.

The promise of the plebiscite made at the end of February remained but McBride said nothing about when it would be held or what its significance would be. After the Legislature was dissolved, debate to clarify the issues involved in a local option plebiscite was no longer possible and a haze of confusion hung over the entire question. Not many people were vitally concerned about local option anyway. The talk of the province since McBride gave the first intimation about it on January 25, 1909, was the coming of the Northern Pacific Railway to British Columbia. The railway story and the recovery of the province from the 1907 depression filled the newspapers and the local option subject was almost entirely ignored.

The apparent studied neglect of the local option issue exasperated the leaders of the LOL. Their questions to the government were specific but they received no answer. In

mid-May, E.B. Morgan, president of the League, wrote to McBride and asked three specific questions: was it intended to defer the plebiscite until the next provincial election; would a majority vote be decisive; if the vote favored local option would legislation follow?<sup>37</sup> McBride refused to commit himself. He also graciously declined an invitation from the LOL to speak at a local option rally.<sup>38</sup>

If local option supporters were offended at McBride for neglecting their cause, they also had to concede that he was not against all moral reforms. By shrewd political manoeuvring McBride offered support to moral reformers with one hand, while he withheld local option in the other. In May, 1909, McBride squelched an attempt to bring organized Sunday sports to North Vancouver and in so doing won warm praise from all evangelical church leaders.<sup>39</sup> Under attorney-general Bowser, the liquor laws were stiffened and strict enforcement was encouraged. Offending saloons, roadhouses and hotels, accustomed to law enforcement of closing laws suddenly found their licenses being cancelled. A Conservative campaign organizer informed McBride that the closing of the Chilliwack Club, while it made some government supporters "sore" was a "very popular move" in Chilliwack, and he added that if the license was renewed, the results would be "disastrous" to the party.<sup>40</sup>

Relations between the government and the LOL remained cool. By mid-summer still no explanation had come from the government. In July, Dr. Spencer tried to prod McBride with a mild threat.

We are much disappointed at having no information and ask that it be given to us. We can assure that, so far as we know the temperance and moral sense of the country, it is increasing volume [sic] against the Government's delay while at the same time liquor men rejoice and publicly boast of their influence with the Government on this question. . . . Allow us also to state that the determination is pretty general that men pledged to the local option principle will be nominated in both political parties if the parties themselves do not do so.<sup>41</sup>

McBride remained unruffled and suavely replied that he had "no desire to prolong the uncertainty as to the date" but was "not in a position to make a public announcement," but that he would "ample time . . . between the announcement and the taking of the plebiscite."<sup>42</sup>

On October 19, 1909, Premier McBride announced that the election and the plebiscite on local option would be held on November 25. The LOL was disappointed because it had wanted the plebiscite to be held on a day other than an election day and because the time now remaining to mount an effective campaign was considered insufficient.<sup>43</sup> Another handicap for the League was McBride's exciting news release about additional railway construction because this news greatly overshadowed the local option question. In the campaign that followed, political candidates and the newspapers scarcely concerned themselves with local option, and, as a result Dr. Spencer, in order to take the debate into the newspapers, had to rely mainly on the Letters-to-the-Editor columns. The railway promoters, William Mackenzie and Donald Mann, who were described by a Kootenay judge as the "power behind the throne in the election," made certain that the railway project was kept before the public by buying up a number

of interior newspapers, including the Nelson Daily News.<sup>44</sup>

Local option received a needy assist from the Vancouver Doctors Association in November when the group announced that liquor, even if moderately used "serves no useful purpose, but is generally harmful" and that it "is a drug and should be prescribed in diseases only."<sup>45</sup> Public meetings held by the LOL, however, failed to arouse enthusiastic support. A rally featuring a guest lecturer from New Zealand was held in Vancouver two days before election day but the meeting was not largely attended.<sup>46</sup>

Those campaigning for local option were at a disadvantage because the government simply made no statements on local option at all until two or three days before election day. What the significance of the plebiscite would be was finally explained by Bowser who stated that if fifty per cent of those who voted for candidates also voted for local option, the government would bring in a local option law.<sup>47</sup> Dr. Spencer was fully aware of the importance to many voters as to whether they were voting for a local option law or only local option in the abstract because the latter phrasing smacked too much of straight prohibition. When the official government notice appeared in the newspapers on November 14, Spencer was furious. The phrasing indicated that the plebiscite was for "local option" instead of for a "local option law," which Spencer had requested. He wrote to McBride immediately.

You will remember I drew your attention to the distinction when with you last week, . . . As long as we understand the situation, it is alright but you will see there is a difference between a vote for local option law and a vote for local option.<sup>48</sup>

McBride replied in two days. "It is the intention of the Government to treat the ballot in question as if the words 'local option law' were printed upon it."<sup>49</sup>

Whatever McBride's assurances, Spencer's fears about popular misconceptions arising from the wording were soon realized. The LOL advertised that the plebiscite was "NOT for Local Option or Prohibition, as contended by liquor men" but "simply a vote 'for' or 'against' a Local Option law."<sup>50</sup> However, an advertisement in another newspaper contended that

the plebiscite is for Local Option -- It says so on the ballot paper. . . . Local Option supporters say that a Local Option law would 'Give the right to every municipality to vote for local control of the liquor license system.' . . . This is NOT TRUE and they know it, but are trying to DECEIVE YOU.<sup>51</sup>

Similar advertisements linked a vote for local option with a vote for prohibition.

A week before the plebiscite was held, Spencer, in desperation, wrote to McBride and asked him to clarify the matter publicly, but the local option question remained confused right until election day.

Liquor men you meet at various places at meals report conversations, which I do not believe took place . . . and if I may suggest to you to make the statement: that you are anxious that the people should have the right of the settlement of this question and that it should be eliminated from politics altogether.<sup>52</sup>

There was also some confusion as to where local option, if it was voted in, would apply. After the plebiscite was over, Parker Williams, member for Newcastle, stated that his constituency had voted against local option because it was an outlying district and there was a prevalent belief that local option would



only apply to municipalities, thereby driving the liquor traffic into the districts.<sup>53</sup>

The actual taking of the plebiscite can only be described as careless. Specific irregularities in voting procedure were reported by Spencer to McBride.

In many places the ballots [sic] were not handed unless asked for, and so hundreds were lost to us . . . . At Vancouver no scrutineers were allowed, except for candidates. . . . In Abbotsford [sic], Pearsonville [sic] and Matsqui there was a shortage of ballots. . . .<sup>54</sup>

The Colonist also reported an unusually high number of disqualified ballots, one out of every twenty.<sup>55</sup> This figure was reduced after Dr. Spencer as scrutineer regained many of the disallowed ballots for the local option total.

The provincial government did not keep a permanent record of the plebiscite balloting and the results were never officially printed. According to one source, there were 46,801 votes polled for the candidates, 22,779 for local option and 19,084 against, leaving a net majority for local option of 3695, but the total for local option fell short of the required half the total votes cast for candidates by slightly over 600.<sup>56</sup> The only larger centres voting against local option were Nanaimo, Lillooet and Nelson, which had also all voted wet in 1898. The Conservatives were returned with an overwhelming majority of 34 seats and only two Liberals and two Socialists were elected.

An increase in temperance sentiment since 1898 was evident in the province, but in view of his great success at the polls, Premier McBride handled the liquor question in the same way he had always handled it, by restrictive legislation. A

more restrictive liquor law was passed and in 1911 municipalities x  
were given the power to do away with saloons completely. This  
 provincial law followed the practice of urban centres like  
 Vancouver where saloons had been eliminated for some time past.  
 Whereas the provincial law by 1913 required hotels to have at  
least 30 rooms, the city of Vancouver required all hotels to  
 have 100 rooms and a fully equipped dining room. In unorganized  
 districts, all licenses after 1910 were granted by the Superin-  
 tendent of Police and the licenses of offending houses were  
 summarily cancelled. John Oliver immediately accused the Con-  
 servatives of "political manipulation" and the centralization  
 of rural licensing under one man did not sit well with those in  
 favor of popular control of licensing.<sup>57</sup>

In February, 1910, the LOL held a convention in Victoria.  
 An appeal to the provincial government to permit local option  
 in at least those areas that had voted for it in the plebiscite  
 was unsuccessful. Stymied in the effort to obtain a provincial  
 local option law, the League decided at the convention to  
 appeal to the federal government for an amendment to the Scott  
 Act that would make local option possible in the cities, towns  
 and districts of British Columbia. It was also decided to help  
work for woman suffrage, for popular election of license commis-  
sioners and for a greater measure of temperance education in  
schools. With the help of Ralph Smith, member of parliament  
 from Vancouver, the amendment to the Scott Act was made rather  
 easily. Dr. Spencer immediately informed McBride about this  
 success of the League although he added that "it would have

been more to our liking if our own Government had given us a Local Option Law."<sup>58</sup>

The convention temporarily hid the fact that the zip had gone out of the League. There was little popular enthusiasm, even among local option workers for the Scott Act amendment, coming as it did on the rebound of a failure to obtain a provincial law, and the amendment lacked the prestige a Law enacted by the popular McBride government would have had. Spencer felt certain that the Okanagan area would support local option through the Scott Act and he held rallies in the towns there but did not succeed in actually bringing the question to a vote.<sup>59</sup> Attempts in 1910 to bring local option into Chilliwack and Prince Rupert were voted down although both locations had favored local option by substantial majorities in 1909.

The LOL faded into oblivion when the Liberal party which had favored local option legislation, was badly defeated in the provincial election of 1912 and Dr. Daniel Spencer left the coast and began working with the Dominion Alliance.

The failure of the LOL was to a large extent due to the failure of the Liberal Party at the polls. Unlike the Conservatives, who never took the local option question seriously, the Liberals made local option legislation part of the party platform in 1909 and again in 1912. Local option was part of a Liberal reform program endorsing a wider use of democracy that also included woman suffrage and the election of license and police commissioners. A 1912 Liberal resolution stated that

the liquor traffic of British Columbia is at present under the absolute control of the Provincial Government and is used as a political machine. . . . The control of the liquor traffic should be vested in municipalities or locally elected boards in unorganized territories.<sup>60</sup>

The charm, good humor and common touch of Premier McBride, and above all, the prosperity of these years under his leadership, doomed the Liberals to defeat and completely removed the temperance issue as a serious political question. In 1909 the Conservative slogan was "McBride Prosperity" and in 1912 McBride boasted that "there is more railway construction going on in British Columbia than in any other part of the Empire today."<sup>61</sup> British Columbians voted for local option because it fitted their reform ideas or because they thought it the decent thing to do. But "the People's Dick" could be high-handed with a group like the LOL and the people would not vote against their favorite son.

## II

[Without World War I it is doubtful if prohibition would ever have come to British Columbia.] Ruth Spence states that prohibition in Canada was "inevitable" and that the war only helped "hasten the end of the legalized liquor traffic in Canada" but this explanation does not fit the case of British Columbia.<sup>62</sup> Besides those British Columbians who could always be counted upon to favor prohibition for moral reasons, the local option movement had attracted the support of those interested in progressive reform, but even so the local option movement had failed. [The exigencies of the war now brought a

new wave of support for prohibition in the province and across Canada, a support that lasted for the duration of the war but ceased when the war ended.)

British Columbians responded to the immediate demands of World War I with zeal and dedication and nearly 56,000 of them joined the Canadian forces.<sup>63</sup> Officially, there were attempts to restrict the use of liquor in the military. "The one drawback to a soldier is over-indulgence in liquor" said the Canadian Minister of Militia, Sam Hughes, who sought to eliminate wet messes in the interests of military efficiency.<sup>64</sup> The people of British Columbia were not of a mind to let the soldiers make the only wartime sacrifices. As the long casualty lists began appearing in the newspapers the spokesmen for prohibition gained a wider hearing when they denounced liquor as an enemy to both efficiency and patriotism. The President of the British Columbia WCTU praised the position of Hughes and urged the elimination of liquor as a prerequisite to victory in the war.

Many have warned that alcohol was breeding inefficiency in the race; yet the governments have failed to cope with this enemy from within, until the danger of the enemy from without caused them to sense "that the fittest only can survive." And the present great struggle has at last convinced them that no drinking nation can be "fit".<sup>65</sup>

No government was prepared to spend time listening to moralistic arguments, but there was a war to be won and this required a total mobilization of all resources, and a wasting of none. It meant a conservation of economic and natural resources and efficiency in production. Tariff and excise charges, particularly on spirits, tobacco, coffee and sugar were

increased in the first federal war budget. A shortage of food caused the federal government to take a critical view of both the domestic and industrial use of foodstuffs. The Food Board issued strict regulations for British Columbians regarding the use of wheat and sugar.<sup>66</sup> Families were not permitted to have more than a fifteen-day supply of flour and in baking, substitute flours were to be mixed with wheat flour. Citizens were urged to have at least one wheatless meal every day and to avoid wheat breakfast foods. In the brewing and distilling industry, the grain shortage eventually led to a complete stoppage of the manufacture of all alcoholic beverages.

In British Columbia the economic recession that had begun in 1913 became even more serious after the outbreak of war and the recession, together with high unemployment, caused serious financial distress in Vancouver and elsewhere in the province in the winter of 1914.<sup>67</sup> Economic conditions slowly improved but with the high cost of unemployment relief and the increasing financial demands of the war money going into saloon coffers looked more and more like sheer waste. Businessmen felt that they needed the participation of working men if the Victory Bond drives were to be successful and that money spent on liquor could better be used for war purposes. The Bishop of Columbia, F.H. Du Vernet, wrote a letter to the World in August, 1915, stating that the

new movement in favor of prohibition during the war is essentially a businessman's movement. . . . Prohibition during the war will beyond all doubt help the people of this province, first to pay their bills for the necessaries of life, and then to give to patriotic funds.<sup>68</sup>

Many church laymen were actively involved in selling war bonds and they agreed heartily with the bishop.<sup>69</sup> A federal war ban on race track gambling further indicated the importance of financial conservation and also won the approval of the moral reformers.

The old moral temperance argument of the past was being replaced by an argument couched in economic and patriotic terms which reasonably demanded prohibition only for the duration of the war.

By the spring of 1915 petitions and requests for wartime prohibition were pouring into the federal and provincial government offices across Canada. The Dominion Alliance went into action again and held a rally in Toronto in March at which a resolution was passed requesting the federal government to prohibit the manufacture and sale of liquor for the duration of the war. A "Temperance Sunday" was planned by the Methodist churches across Canada as a "patriotic demonstration" for wartime prohibition.<sup>70</sup> Prohibitionists wanted prohibition on a permanent basis but saw the propaganda value of using the war to gain their ends quickly. Much was made of the restrictions placed on the liquor traffic in both Russia and France. Furthermore it was thought that once prohibition was enacted the benefits of the system would become so evident that all opposition to it would cease. "Give me one generation of people who are total abstainers," the Honourable George E. Foster had once stated, "and I will, with a 5 per cent tariff, undertake to show the greatest regime of prosperity that has ever come to this country."<sup>71</sup> To prohibitionists the folly of using "wartime prohibition" as a slogan became obvious after the war.

The British Columbia Social Service Commission had played little part in the temperance movement before the war. The Commission represented all Protestant denominations and other social institutions and was an organization with a wide interest in social reform. In the prairie provinces the provincial Social Service Commissions took the lead in urging wartime prohibition and in October, 1914, the British Columbia Commission interested itself in the question as well. The war had created a new spirit of religious optimism because the Canadian government was forced to lean on the churches to help maintain public morale and also to actively help the war effort by allowing their premises to be used as recruiting centres.<sup>72</sup> Consequently, the voice of churchmen now carried a greater degree of influence with government officials. At first religious and temperance leaders decided to again press for a local option law but it soon became clear that a campaign for wartime prohibition would attract more support.<sup>73</sup> The Social Service Commission met in Victoria in May, 1915, and with an Anglican, Archdeacon Scriven in the chair, passed a resolution praising King George for setting a high example by declaring total abstinence in his own palace and called for wartime prohibition for reasons of "national efficiency" with a plebiscite when peace returned.<sup>74</sup> Members of the Social Service Commission joined a delegation that visited Premier McBride in August. A member of the delegation was also a Victoria alderman and he pointed out that \$1,000,000 a year was being spent on drink in his city and that this money could be put to better use in the



war effort. The request for wartime prohibition was repeated and the premier promised to answer this request as soon as possible.<sup>75</sup>

The Social Service Commission of British Columbia was not alone in its interest in wartime prohibition. In the spring of 1915, businessmen began to show an interest in the question and at various centres in the province, including Chilliwack, New Westminster and Vancouver, they began joining themselves into prohibition committees. In May between five and six hundred business and professional men of Vancouver and district attended a prohibition banquet in Dominion Hall and unanimously endorsed prohibition in the province by a standing vote.<sup>76</sup> John Nelson, the owner and editor of the World, interpreted the wartime prohibition movement to his readers as something new. In a front-page editorial entitled "Prohibition During the War" he stated that

we believe that without exception former temperance movements have been crusades having their origin in the moral and religious life of the community. . . .

The present campaign will . . . be an economic one. Throughout the province it is being fathered by shopkeepers, miners, professional men, mill hands, lumbermen, farmers and businessmen of all kinds. It has no political boundaries or limits. . . . Total abstainers will, in this campaign, find themselves reinforced by the votes of club men and moderate and even immoderate drinkers throughout the province.

The candid opinion of most sensible men today is unmistakably in one direction, namely, that no country that is at war has any business permitting the continuance of a trade which imposes unnecessary burdens on industry and commerce and entails worse ravages than war itself.<sup>77</sup>

Nelson was a Methodist and served on temperance committees in his church. He acquired control of the World in May, 1915, and it became the first and only daily newspaper to come out strongly for prohibition. Nelson refused to allow liquor ads in his paper and as the prohibition campaign advanced, he also refused to print anti-prohibition propaganda.

Anti-prohibitionists quickly detected the new line of argument used by the prohibitionists and, at the beginning at least, underrated its influence. "Since the prohibitionist party has frankly forsaken the moral grounds for the economic," wrote anti-prohibitionist James G. Lawson to McBride, "it would seem that they can be forcibly met."<sup>78</sup> He could not have been more wrong.

Recognizing the earnestness and enthusiasm of the businessmen, the executive of the Social Service Council readily turned over the leadership of the movement for wartime prohibition to them and suggested that they begin to organize on a province-wide basis.<sup>79</sup> An agent, D.F. Glass, was sent to sound out businessmen throughout the province and in view of the increasing support for prohibition that he found, it was decided to hold a prohibition convention in Vancouver in August. An ad hoc committee looked after preliminary arrangements and also demanded of the Premier that he fulfill his promise made early in August to answer the request of the Social Service Commission for wartime prohibition. It was felt that McBride's answer would give the convention something to work on. The day before the convention opened the Premier sent a letter to the convention

committee.

It has been decided, after careful deliberation to submit the whole question to a plebiscite of the electorate. The date of the taking of the plebiscite will be announced as soon as it has been decided what shall form the basis of the referendum.<sup>80</sup>

Delegates arriving for the convention were men "thoroughly representative of the businessmen of all creeds and parties in the province."<sup>81</sup> John Nelson was selected as chairman for the two-day affair.

Premier McBride's letter indicated that the prohibition question was again negotiable and this gave the convention delegates some satisfaction, but the events of the 1909 local option campaign were still in memory, and in view of the fact that McBride had given neither the terms, date nor significance of the plebiscite, his letter was rejected by the convention. Instead the convention demanded a referendum on a prohibition act, preferably modelled on the Alberta or Manitoba Act, at "the earliest legal date", and that the referendum be held on a day other than an election day, and that in the meanwhile the bars be closed at 7 p.m. daily.<sup>82</sup> Three thousand dollars was raised for an initial campaign fund.

Some popular enthusiasm was generated by the convention and a public rally attracted 4000 persons who came to hear the guest speakers, Principal Lloyd, President of the Dominion Alliance, and Nellie McClung of Manitoba. To maintain interest in prohibition the People's Prohibition Association (PPA) was organized on a province-wide basis. Convention delegates brought their enthusiasm back to their home communities and

before long the press reported temperance activity at various places including Ladysmith, Oak Bay, and Nelson. The PPA organization was elaborate and never really functioned as intended. Local PPA councils were to be set up, especially in towns and cities and these local councils were responsible and sent representatives to the central organization of every electoral district in the province. The central organizations in turn were responsible and sent representatives to the committee of 100, which was to meet annually in a convention. An executive committee centred in Vancouver was the important supervisory and planning body of the PPA.<sup>7</sup> It included the leading members of the committee of 100, other temperance societies and important PPA committees. Routine work was carried on by a small paid staff consisting of an executive secretary, a stenographer and others as finances permitted. The executive committee met regularly and was the key group in maintaining the PPA as an activist body. The executive committee in fact was the PPA. The organization at lower levels was not strong, members coming together "at times for campaign purposes."<sup>83</sup> It was not a signed or paid membership that joined local PPA groups and the members were "principally composed of the membership of the Methodist and Presbyterian churches."<sup>84</sup> The leading figures in the PPA were also Methodists and Presbyterians.

The leading members of the PPA were prominent businessmen. The organization was described in the Christian Guardian as "not by any means a Church movement" and apparently some clergymen even felt hurt at not having been given influential

positions.<sup>85</sup> The president, Jonathan Rogers, was also president of the Vancouver Board of Trade and owned the half-million dollar Rogers Building on Granville Street. He donated office space to the PPA. Rogers was a Methodist, as was W.A. Cantelon, honorary secretary of the PPA, and John Nelson, a later president. E.B. Morgan, formerly of the Local Option League, was treasurer of the PPA and president of the North-West Trust Company. Other members of the executive, George F. Gibson, George J. Hammond and W.C. Findlay, were all known in Vancouver business circles.<sup>86</sup>

The PPA used the same political pressure tactics as the Local Option League had done. Premier McBride was not impressed by the amount of activity in which the PPA engaged, but the group obviously had the backing of a substantial section of the British Columbia business community and therefore he was unable to dismiss the PPA as well-meaning but irrelevant as he had the League. When a PPA delegation called on the Premier in September and presented to him the declaration of the August convention, McBride promised early consideration of their suggestion for a referendum.

It is doubtful if McBride had any policy on the liquor question beyond a plebiscite. Old-time Tories in the legislature seriously felt that a referendum was a non-British practice and opposed it on that ground, and in any case they favored compensation to the liquor interests if any temperance legislation was passed.<sup>87</sup> Bowser, who took over as premier late in 1915, roused the ire of these Tories when he agreed to a referendum on the prohibition question.

Confident that Premier McBride would accede to their demands of an early referendum, the PPA began campaigning immediately and spent almost \$2500 in October alone.<sup>88</sup> As time wore on and no word came from the government about a date, the PPA executive grew more and more impatient. Finally, early in November, McBride wrote a letter to the PPA that set the matter back to where it was before the August convention. McBride stated that the government was opposed to direct legislation and would therefore return to the plebiscite policy, and that for reasons of economy and because it made the largest vote possible, the plebiscite would be held on election day and the question of prohibition would be treated in conjunction with other questions on the issue.<sup>89</sup> Jonathan Rogers then threatened that the PPA would "approach the other parties," but before the end of the year McBride resigned the premiership and the PPA had to begin negotiations with the new premier, W.J. Bowser.<sup>90</sup>

For a few months Bowser maintained the same policy of silence on the prohibition question as had McBride. He was now the target of the prohibitionists and "all kinds of pressure" was brought to bear on him "in letters, resolutions, newspaper articles" but he ignored all demands for an explanation of his policy on prohibition.<sup>91</sup> In doing so Bowser ignored the increasing urgency of the question and the growing strength of the PPA. By the end of January the PPA claimed to have committees at work in all but two of the thirty provincial electoral districts.<sup>92</sup> When Bowser set by-election dates in late February for the election of three new cabinet ministers the PPA decided

to use the by-elections as a test of strength. The PPA openly opposed the Conservative candidates and two of them were defeated, one in Victoria and one in Vancouver. Bowser blamed their defeat at least in part on the activities of the prohibitionists.<sup>93</sup>

Within a day of the by-elections Bowser completely reversed himself and espoused a policy that exceeded the expectations of the PPA.

To a large prohibition delegation in Victoria, led by J. Rogers, Bowser pledged that a referendum, not a plebiscite, would be held on a prohibition act acceptable to the prohibitionists.<sup>94</sup> He was given three cheers by the delegation. Two weeks later Bowser confirmed his statements in a letter to Rogers. The letter also promised more stringent liquor control legislation while the prohibition measure was pending.

We propose to introduce a measure at the present session of the legislature providing for the prohibition of the sale of alcoholic liquors so far as our provincial jurisdiction permits, to take effect on January 1, 1917, provided that, at a referendum of the voters of the province, a majority of those who vote on the question pronounce in favour of such action. This referendum will take place on the same day as the approaching election. . . . [L]egislation more stringent than that in existence at present should be imposed and take effect at once and remain in force during the war. We propose to still further limit the opening and closing hours for the traffic and this will be applicable to clubs as well as hotels.<sup>95</sup>

The PPA and all lovers of prohibition were, of course, delighted. According to Jonathan Rogers, the matter was now where they wanted it, outside politics.<sup>96</sup> Within a few days eleven of the churches of Victoria had endorsed Bowser's prohibition policy.<sup>97</sup> It was inevitable that Bowser would be charged with political opportunism. When a prohibition meeting of about

1000 persons was held in Victoria late in March, Bowser was accused of calling it in his own support. H.C. Brewster, the Liberal leader, charged Bowser with stealing a Liberal plank.<sup>98</sup>

The PPA took no chances on the Conservatives. A note was sent to Brewster, the Liberal leader, demanding to know whether the Liberals would support a Conservative prohibition act if it passed in a referendum, and if the Liberals were elected and no prohibition act had yet been passed, whether they would enact one. Brewster replied positively to both questions.<sup>99</sup> Events were definitely moving in the direction favored by the PPA.

Opponents of prohibition were now on the defensive.

It does not require a prophetic adept to arrive at the conclusion that a multitude of bibulously inclined persons now living are doomed to suffer the experience of an extreme dry spell not long hence

wrote the editor of the B.C. Federationist in March, 1916.<sup>100</sup>

Organized labor suffered a severe drop in membership after the outbreak of war but it was still a political force to contend with and it was openly opposed to prohibition. Armed with a petition containing 6000 signatures opposing prohibition, a delegation from a Cumberland local of the miners union called on the provincial government. The miners argued that beer was a necessity of life for them because it enabled them to endure their exhausting work, and they threatened to cause trouble if prohibition passed.<sup>101</sup> Understandably, the most energetic opposition to prohibition in the ranks of labor came from those who would be directly affected -- the bartenders and the brewery workers. It was estimated that 3700 men were employed in these



occupations and that they had 6000 dependents.<sup>102</sup> However, labor leaders tried to show that prohibition indirectly concerned all of labor.

Life and death to the working class is not a question of beer or no beer. It is first, last and always, under present industrial conditions, a question of jobs. If prohibition became law tomorrow in Vancouver, New Westminster and Victoria, would that fact increase the number of jobs available for the unemployed who now abound in each of those cities? We do not believe it would.<sup>103</sup>

The British Columbia Workers Equal Rights Association was formed in Vancouver at the instigation of brewery workers and an attempt was made to attract active support and finances from other labor groups. The Association aimed to block any prohibition legislation and failing in that, to obtain compensation for displaced laborers. A newspaper, the Anti-Prohibitionist was begun, but only one issue was printed and the group never became very influential. Labor leaders came to the aid of the brewery workers by denouncing prohibition as class legislation, for the benefit of businessmen. Prohibition, wrote the editor of the Federationist

merely voices the material aspirations of one group of capitalists as opposed to another. . . . One group believes working men will be rendered more productive -- and therefore more profitable -- by being denied opportunity to consume alcoholic liquors. The material interest of the other group lies in the profit to be derived from the sale of alcoholic liquor.<sup>104</sup>

The PPA recognized the opposition of labor to prohibition. A member of the executive warned that prohibition would not get the support of more than ten per cent of labor unless much work was done.<sup>105</sup> John Nelson tried to reason with labor. "The

Prohibition Movement is primarily a middle-class reform," he said, "but it assails a common enemy of all classes."<sup>106</sup> He also stated optimistically that labor leaders were misrepresenting the attitude of organized labor. Overt efforts to win over labor included the employing of a salaried trouble-shooter to work among the labor organizations in the province and the involvement in prohibition committees of a number of prominent labor people like R.H. Neelands, secretary of the Typographical Union. The efforts to win labor to the prohibition side did not impress labor leaders. One by one the Trades and Labor Councils of Vancouver, New Westminster, Victoria and Prince Rupert went on record as opposing prohibition.

More powerful in their opposition to prohibition than labor were the brewers, liquor retailers and hotel proprietors. The Merchants Protective Association, an organization formed to protect those manufacturers and merchants involved in the liquor traffic, was organized to meet the threat posed by the PPA. Many members of the Merchant's Protective Association (MPA) were prominent and wealthy citizens: H.V. Pratt, Wholesale Manager, the Hudson Bay Company; J.W. Ambery, Manager, Hiram Walker & Co.; Nels Nelson, owner, New Westminster Breweries. A few prominent businessmen not connected with the MPA also protested against prohibition legislation on the grounds that prohibition would hurt investment prospects in British Columbia. This argument was put forward by C. Marpole who had helped raise \$2,000,000 of British capital for the British Columbia Breweries in 1913 and by the management of firms like Evans, Coleman Contracting and

Yorkshire Guarantees and Securities Corporation.<sup>107</sup> A front page article in the Colonist made the same point, quoting a financier from Spirling and Company, a firm that claimed to have raised over \$100,000,000 for investment in the province.<sup>108</sup> In the interior the Prince George Board of Trade opposed prohibition and other northern towns also protested against it.<sup>109</sup>

The two rival organizations -- the PPA and the MPA -- kept a very close watch on one another and a delegation to Victoria or a newspaper advertisement by one was sure to provoke a similar action from the other. A PPA delegation visited McBride in 1915 and had no sooner taken its leave when Colonel Prior, president of the Victoria Board of Trade and members of the MPA called on the premier. The MPA delegation presented a petition signed by nearly 34,000 persons asking that no prohibition legislation be passed during the war; that no referendum or plebiscite be held during this time; that if a plebiscite be found necessary it be held on an election day; and that the principle of compensation to the liquor traffic be recognized.<sup>110</sup> The premier was non-committal but he needed to take no action at all to satisfy the MPA.

Premier Bowser's sudden capitulation to PPA demands in 1916 was looked on by the MPA as a betrayal and left the compensation issue as the only question still open to argument. The threat to the livelihood of those engaged in the liquor traffic was a very real one and some of these people were desperate. H.F. Johnston, a Kelowna hotelkeeper, published a letter in the newspapers which he claimed was "on behalf of many hotelkeepers in

the same position."<sup>111</sup> Johnston explained how he had purchased his hotel in 1911, at which time the major price item was the liquor license. In 1913 a change in law had forced him to add more rooms to the hotel. As a result he was deeply in debt and claimed he would be ruined by prohibition. E.A. Tulk, chief executive officer of the MPA, led another delegation to see Bowser and many arguments were presented in favor of compensation but the premier refused to make any promises. In the newspapers the MPA used the loyalty theme to play up what they considered to be the injustice of prohibition without compensation. "Is it BRITISH?" the advertisement read, "Is it consistent with the principles of British fair play---?"<sup>112</sup> Prominent men in the province like Bishop Doull of Kootenay Synod and the Lieutenant-Governor of the province were sympathetic to the compensation claim but others, even if anti-prohibitionist, were aware of the complicated practical issue compensation represented.<sup>113</sup> Estimates of the extent of investment in the liquor industry ranged from \$5,000,000 to \$20,000,000.<sup>114</sup> The News-Advertiser reported that in Vancouver at least, the business community was "adverse to any measure to financially reimburse liquor dealers."<sup>115</sup>

The British Columbia Prohibition Act was introduced on ✓  
May 23, 1916. By its terms the sale of alcohol and liquor was completely prohibited except for sacramental, medicinal or industrial purposes. Doctors, druggists and dentists would be able to purchase liquor for medical uses from government appointed vendors and in government buildings constructed for the

purpose. There was some vocal opposition to this part of the act by the druggists of the province.<sup>116</sup> Importation by private individuals from outside the province was allowed. The Act was to become effective July 1, 1917 instead of January 1 as Bowser had originally indicated. No mention of compensation was contained in the Act but it was understood by the Colonist reporter that a Commission would look into the question if the Act was carried by referendum.<sup>117</sup> The provincial election, together with a referendum on woman suffrage and prohibition, was set for September 14.

A draft of the Act was in the hands of the PPA executive as early as April 5 and, except for regret about postponement of its effective date, the executive heartily approved the act. After all, R.W. Harris, a lawyer and a prohibitionist, had been called in to help frame it. Jonathan Rogers called it the best Prohibition Act of the four Provinces of western Canada.<sup>118</sup>

Opposition to the bill came from within Bowser's own party. R.H. Pooley, member from Esquimalt, tried to get an amendment passed that would grant compensation but failed. The two Liberals in the Legislature took little part in the debate on the Act and Brewster's only criticism was that the Act could have been even more restrictive. The bill was carried through second reading with only five votes, all Conservative, against it.<sup>119</sup>

The PPA claimed that it was politically neutral and that those candidates who stood for prohibition would be supported, regardless of party. Prohibition speakers were sent to

participate in many of the political rallies of both sides.<sup>120</sup>

At some prohibition meetings it was suggested that the drys run their own candidates but this idea was rejected.<sup>121</sup> Despite the PPA's claims of neutrality, the belated support of the Conservatives for the Prohibition Act did not upset the belief that the Conservatives were "wet" and the Liberals "dry".<sup>122</sup>

The Liberals had a consistent record of resolutions in favor of local option and prohibition. Within a month after the 1915 PPA convention, the party executive met in Vancouver and passed a resolution favoring the convention request that a referendum be held and that a prohibition act be promptly enacted if the vote was in favor of it. Although the Liberal Party had done nothing to attract anti-prohibitionist votes in the many years as opposition party, the sudden support of a prohibition bill by the Conservatives probably brought more votes to the Liberals than it gained for Bowser's party. A reporter stated that in the interior the "hotel influence" had always been Conservative but after March, 1916, this influence had become negligible and a "mixed vote" could be expected.<sup>123</sup>

The Liberal Party made the election issue one of reform and elimination of political corruption and in doing so correctly assessed the trend of public opinion. Many Liberal candidates came from evangelical churches and this assured the party of the prohibition vote. Conservatives had long discouraged the woman suffrage movement begun by the WCTU, but the movement had attracted a much wider support than that of the temperance forces and was now being championed by the National Council of

Women and the University Women's Club. Liberals had backed woman suffrage for years and now stood to benefit from this support. Labor was opposed to prohibition but was aware that the Liberals had offered to set up a provincial department of labor to deal with specific labor problems. In short, as the fortunes of the Liberal Party rose, the prospect of a vote in favor of prohibition rose as well, because the issue of prohibition had been closely connected to the Liberal platform along with other reforms for some time. If the political housecleaning was to be thorough, so the campaign talk went, all Liberal ideas would have to be implemented. In a joint statement made by H.C. Brewster and C.H. Tupper, the latter having forsaken Bowser in favor of supporting the Liberal leader, it was said that the province needed to be "cleansed of all that is evil, mean and sordid and blessed with fine ideals and good government. . . ." It is not a fight of parties, but of people against official wrongdoing."<sup>124</sup>

The Conservative campaign slogan "No change during the War" hardly appealed to reform sentiment. McBride failed to recognize the magnitude of the new reform movement and by the time Bowser did, it was too late. In the 1916 campaign Bowser offered a platform containing a positive programme that included free land grants for returned soldiers and the founding of a Workmen's Compensation Board. However, the Conservative Party was divided over railway policy and lesser issues like prohibition, and Bowser, who was known as the "little Czar", lacked the popular appeal of McBride.

Prohibitionists considered themselves part of the progressive reform movement. In their opinion the state had the positive duty of enacting and enforcing laws that permitted the highest physical, mental and moral development of the individual, and laws that prevented practices tending to debase or injure the individual, for the individual belonged to the nation as well as to himself.<sup>125</sup> John Nelson tied prohibition into the reform package the day before the election took place with a turgid statement.

Let your vote tomorrow be on the side of Progress  
 against reaction, of Virtue against Vice, of  
 Efficiency against Debauchery of the Home, the  
 Mother and the Boy against the Saloon, the Brothel  
 and the Distillers Profits.<sup>126</sup>

Prohibitionists basked in the respectability that went along with Liberal support. The support, however, was largely tacit and neither the Liberals nor Conservatives in their respective campaigns gave much attention to the prohibition referendum. On the other hand, the presence of a large influential daily like the World which had long since declared itself for prohibition meant that the press could not ignore the prohibition issue as it had in 1909. In fact the prohibition debate in the newspapers grew so intense that it was found advisable by some newspapers to sell space in the letters-to-the-editor section at classified rates.<sup>127</sup> Since the politicians refused to debate the issues of prohibition the campaign was continued chiefly by the interested parties on both sides and was characterized by extremism and exaggeration. The prohibition campaign thus became a kind of secondary plot to the main political fight.



Energetic PPA organizers attempted to revive the province-wide organization as suggested by the 1915 convention and the campaign was closely directed from the Vancouver executive committee. It was generally taken for granted that the coastal areas would vote for prohibition but there was some doubt about the interior. Prominent temperance speakers like J.W. Bengough, cartoonist, and Rev. J.S. Henderson, loaned on full salary by the Presbyterian Church, B.H. Spence, loaned from the Dominion Alliance and local men were circulated throughout the province as platform speakers. Committee after committee was organized to supervise various phases of the work. There was a committee for literature distribution, a soldier's vote committee, committees to check and correct voters lists, canvassers, and scrutineers and photographers were trained and organized to serve at polling booths and check voting irregularities and impersonations.<sup>128</sup> J.S. Moir, a Methodist who lived in Grand Forks at the time, described the organizational work of the prohibitionists.

So intent were the forces arraigned against John Barleycorn that local committees were organized in almost every hamlet. . . . In the canvas for funds every business and mining man contributed. Many of them were not temperance men, but in view of the need to concentrate every effort to win the war they were willing to assist.<sup>129</sup>

By early August it was estimated that a million pamphlets, circulars, posters, booklets, etc. had been sent out from PPA headquarters.<sup>130</sup> Much of the routine work of canvassing and literature distribution was done by the women of the WCTU and by church people and Sunday School children. Prohibitionists

in Victoria and Vancouver also used children's parades to gain publicity.<sup>131</sup>

Publicity and propaganda for the anti-prohibition position was handled by the MPA. The last hope was a popular defeat of the prohibition referendum. The MPA had the support of most of the newspapers in the province, much of labor and an influential minority of businessmen. The MPA probably had an easier time raising funds than did the PPA and where it was thought to be in the best interests of the anti-prohibitionists, large-scale transactions were attempted. In Kamloops, for example, it was rumored that A.E. Tulk of the MPA and Captain Worsnop, a local brewer and hotel manager, tried unsuccessfully to purchase the Kamloops Telegram.<sup>132</sup> Every community had a natural anti-prohibition group by nature of the vested interests in hotels, liquor retail and wholesale stores and restaurants. Brewers would not be required to cease operation by the Prohibition Act but they strongly supported the MPA not only to maintain the retail trade but because many hotels and the expensive expansions hotel owners had undertaken after saloons were abolished were heavily financed by the brewers.<sup>133</sup> The liquor trade was thus a close-knit industry. But since no political party was supporting even the status quo, as the Conservatives had done formerly, and there appeared to be little hope of gaining compensation, the MPA could not be optimistic about the future. The PPA was able to camouflage its aims within the reform movement but the MPA was placed in an isolated position.

A campaign budget of \$17,000 was called for by the PPA.<sup>134</sup> Most of the money came from membership fees and donations. The evangelical churches contributed to the PPA as well although the PPA preferred to raise money from church members by appealing directly to individuals rather than relying on fixed church contributions. Wealthy Methodist and Presbyterian businessmen like W.H. Malkin, David Spencer and J. Leckie made regular substantial contributions, and in his retail advertisements Spencer urged his customers to support the Prohibition Act.<sup>135</sup> John Nelson refused to advertise liquor in the World but in return his paper became the official mouthpiece of the PPA and occasionally extra copies of his newspaper were printed for circulation across the province. Early in February the PPA began printing membership tickets which were sold for one dollar. Purchase of a ticket carried with it a three-month subscription to the World and half the amount realized on ticket sales was turned over to Nelson.<sup>136</sup> Funds also came in from the WCTU and the Templars, while the Dominion Alliance contributed \$2600 to the campaign.

The fight over prohibition was a bitter one, punctuated by frequent exchanges of invective between the MPA and the PPA. Men of military rank were employed on both sides. A prohibition rally in Vancouver was interrupted by a returned serviceman who threatened and heckled the chairman and a fist fight broke out, ending in an arrest.<sup>137</sup> Advertisements by the liquor interests frequently sneered about the "Paid" People's Prohibition Association and the PPA countered with the "Liquor" Merchants Protective

Association. Aware of the advantage that the patriotic and economic demands of the time had given the prohibition cause, the PPA did not hesitate to return to moralistic arguments and personal attacks on those engaged in the liquor trade. In August, John Nelson wrote an editorial entitled "Parasites."

The liquor man does no good to a living soul; the economic waste he brings in war-time when economy should be practised everywhere means nothing to him. He wants only his dividends, his pound of flesh, and he cares for nothing else. . . . [T]he world may go to pieces but he is happy if only his pocket does not suffer.

It is time that B.C. got rid of the parasitic breed. It has suffered from them long enough.<sup>138</sup>

The MPA slung some mud of its own. Both Jonathan Rogers and John Nelson were accused of attempting to promote themselves politically. Other prohibition leaders were charged with simply fishing in troubled waters and a few of the PPA executive were accused of having been directly or indirectly involved in the hotel business in the recent past.<sup>139</sup>

Prohibitionist advertisements stressed the patriotic and economic necessities of prohibition. The following is typical.

Are We To Do Our Duty by the Empire  
or Are We To Neglect It?

Are we to "Be British" indeed, and remove a  
"greater enemy than the Hun" from our midst?  
Is the sacrifice made by our soldiers for us  
on the battlefield to be the only sacrifice?

The Bar or the War? That is the Question of the Hour.<sup>140</sup>

Anti-prohibitionist propaganda stressed the bad economic effects of prohibition. Taxes would increase by \$103,000 in Vancouver, and thousands of men would be put out of work.<sup>141</sup> It was almost humorous when the MPA began attacking the Prohibition Act for not

being prohibitory enough under such captions as "A Prohibitionist Opposes the Prohibition Act."

Both sides were quick to claim and publicize support from outside their immediate circles. Bishop du Vernet went on record as favoring prohibition at this time, but the opposition to prohibition of another Anglican, the Rev. Owen Bulkley, did not go unnoticed. Archbishop Carey of the Catholic Church had only to say that "any abatement . . . [of treating and saloon drinking] will doubtless save many from a drunkard's doom. . . ." And Nelson classified the clergyman as a prohibitionist.<sup>142</sup>

Billy Sunday was invited by the PPA to speak in Victoria and in Vancouver in August and he accepted. His visit was to be the highlight of the campaign for prohibition. An American church historian has described Sunday as the "champion of those who hoped nostalgically for a simple solution to contemporary problems."<sup>143</sup> There was some debate in the newspapers as to his respectability, but when he arrived in Vancouver a large audience already committed to prohibition awaited him. People came to hear Billy Sunday extol the puritan virtues and denounce the liquor interests and he did not disappoint them. He was fully aware why he had been invited and preached accordingly.

The saloon is an infidel. It has no belief in God and would close all the churches and hang its filthy rags on the sacred altars. It is a moral clearing house for all the filth of the universe, and is a liar in every way for it holds out false hopes to its victims. It is God's worst enemy and hell's best friend.<sup>144</sup>

The World reported that Sunday had been heard by "the largest audience [12,000] ever assembled under one roof in Canada" but the News Advertiser was more critical, stating that the meeting

did "not prove a sensation."<sup>145</sup> The Federationist estimated that three fourths of the listeners were women and dismissed Billy Sunday as a capitalist stooge.<sup>146</sup>

As election day drew near the anti-prohibition forces showed that, desperate as the situation was for them, they were able to maintain a saving sense of humor. An anti-prohibitionist pamphleteer gave some advice to those who might suffer in a dry spell.

Should B.C. go dry, don't forget that your druggist can supply you with big doses of alcohol in the following patent medicines:

	<u>% alcohol</u>	
Hamlin's Wizard Oil	65	
Hall's Great Discovery	43	
Rexall's Rheumatic Remedy	18	
Hooker's Wigwam Tonic	20.7	147

On September 14 the people of British Columbia voted for the Prohibition Act by a margin of 36,392 to 27,217.<sup>148</sup> Woman suffrage also carried by a large margin. Only three centres in the entire province voted against the Act: Alberni, Lillooet and Fernie. Public interest in the victory of the prohibition forces was greatly overshadowed by the decisive Liberal victory but the prohibitionists were jubilant. It appeared now that the only thing left to do was to wait until July 1, 1917 when the Act would go into effect.

In the meantime dramatic events were taking place overseas. The Conservative government had arranged, with the full knowledge and consent of the PPA, to allow British Columbia soldiers at home and abroad to vote in the election and on the two referenda. Both the PPA and the MPA had agents in London to keep an eye on the referendum vote there. Soldiers' polls continued until

December 31, 1916, and when the final results came in, prohibitionists were astounded to discover that the civilian referendum vote had been overturned by the military vote. The soldiers at home voted fairly evenly on the prohibition question but not those overseas. When the final tally was made at the end of March, prohibition had lost by 822 votes.<sup>149</sup>

The PPA immediately complained that the overseas voting had been irregular and accused Sir Richard McBride, now agent-general for British Columbia in London, of conducting the polls in a partial manner. At the end of March, 1917, a prohibition convention was held in Victoria and a motion was passed requesting that a prohibition measure be passed despite the overseas vote, which had been irregularly carried out, and that this measure last for the duration of the war and for a reasonable time thereafter. Premier Brewster replied that if irregularities in the overseas voting were proved, his government would reconsider prohibitory legislation.<sup>150</sup> Some Liberals were ready to accede to the wishes of the prohibitionists, as Dr. Wolverton, Member for Nelson, indicated to Brewster.

Because of their confidence in the Liberal Party as regards temperance legislation, by far the greater part of the prohibitionists voted with us. They believe that the deferred vote was planned in the interests of the wets; that the vote in England and France was outrageously manipulated and that a fair vote would show a large majority for prohibition.

They are not only in earnest but are angry at being defeated by fraud. . . . I believe that if the government does not give [prohibition] we shall lose the Prohibition Vote at the Next Election.<sup>151</sup>

Pressure on the Liberal government continued from both wets and dries, as Brewster described to one of his supporters.

The heritage handed to this government in the Prohibition Referendum is one which is taxing the patience, forbearance . . . to a degree which you . . . will be able to appreciate. . . . [T]he Government does not intend to be cajoled by representations made on behalf of prohibition or against it . . .<sup>152</sup>

The MPA was quite satisfied with the turn of events overseas and tried to get the provincial government to make the results official. While the government was still investigating the soldiers' vote, the solicitor of the MPA filed a writ asking that the referendum results be published in the B.C. Gazette immediately.<sup>153</sup> As stories circulated of irregularities in the vote, the wets began to claim that soldiers were being bribed by the dries to make false statements.<sup>154</sup>

Finally it was announced that a Royal Commission would be sent to England to hold an inquiry into voting irregularities there. Again both the MPA and the PPA sent qualified representatives to attend the hearings. The Commission found that there had indeed been irregularities in voting procedure.<sup>155</sup> Many ballots had to be disqualified because the names of soldiers on the ballot envelopes could not be traced. Some soldiers had voted as many as four times and also damaging, particularly in the eyes of prohibitionists but also legally, was evidence that free beer had been used as an inducement to get soldiers to go and vote. The final decision of the Commission was to allow only 3796 votes out of nearly 8500 cast, but no blame was attached to any person or group for causing the irregularities. Thus the referendum verdict was reversed again with the prohibitionists firmly in the majority.



The July 1 date on which the Prohibition Act was to take effect had already been passed but the legislature wasted no time in introducing the Act, which was presented for third reading on August 16, passed and assented to on August 17 and the new effective date was set for October 1, 1917. Because September 30 fell on a Sunday, prohibition became effective September 29, at 10 p.m.

On the eve of the implementation of the British Columbia Prohibition Act, John Nelson had a word of consolation for those who had opposed prohibition, particularly the newspapers.

The World is quite satisfied with what it has achieved and it believes that Prohibition will be so beneficial to the community that even the newspapers who fought openly or covertly against the measure and which benefitted so largely through the advertising of the liquor men, will come to see in time that the suppression of the liquor traffic was not only a patriotic duty but an economic benefit.<sup>156</sup>

A reporter for the Province visited downtown Vancouver that Saturday evening and described the scene in somewhat nostalgic tones.

At 10 o'clock practically every house [bar] closed its doors and there was a little cheering and singing of Auld Lang Syne but the scenes were nothing like the wild excitement of New Year. The late cars carried home the men who had been doing their shopping, and it was noticeable that some were carrying decanters, jugs and other bar supplies. Altogether the old regime passed out with dignity.<sup>157</sup>

## NOTES ON CHAPTER II

1. The Dominion Alliance was organized at both federal and provincial levels and represented the political pressure group of churches and temperance societies seeking to influence the government authorities at various levels to pass restrictive and ultimately prohibitory laws relating to the liquor traffic. The constitution is printed in Ruth E. Spence, Prohibition in Canada (Toronto: Ontario Branch of the Dominion Alliance, 1919), pp. 569-73.

2. Presbyterian Church, General Assembly, Acts and Proceedings, 1898, p. 287.

3. See Canada, Sessional Papers, 1899, XIV, vi, x, and 292-301.

4. Daily Colonist (Victoria), Sept. 25, 1898, p. 4.

5. See Henry J. Morgan, ed., Dominion Annual Register, 1878, pp. 153-5.

6. Joseph Schull, Laurier the First Canadian (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1965), p. 158.

7. J.F. Davison, "The Problem of Liquor Legislation in Canada," Canadian Bar Review, (September 1926), pp. 468-82.

8. Daily Colonist (Victoria), Feb. 23, 1908, p. 4. The newspaper opposed local option however. See its condemnation of local option in P.E.I. in issue of Feb. 14, 1891, p. 4 and also a criticism of a later attempt by the Local Option League to get local option in Prince Rupert -- July 15, 1910, p. 15.

9. In Vancouver it was said that license fees were raised \$50 in order to pay for a special detective squad whose only job was to patrol the licensed houses. See Vancouver Daily Province, June 6, 1907, p. 6. In Victoria, Chinese liquor dealers were unable to obtain licenses from the license commissioner, and so the mayor, knowing that the dealers sold liquor anyway, issued illegal "city" licenses to them, but these were revoked by the commissioners. See Colonist, April 9, 1904, p. 1.

10. Victoria Daily Times, July 23, 1907.

11. World (Vancouver), February 7, 1906, p. 2.

12. Pioneer (Toronto), September 25, 1918 in Spence pp. 459-60.

13. Victoria Daily Times, Oct. 2, 1906, p. 1.

14. Ibid., May 3, 1906, p. 3.
15. World (Vancouver), Sept. 5, 1908, p. 6.
16. Spence, p. 460.
17. Vancouver Daily Province, Jan. 23, 1907, pp. 5, 16.
18. Ibid.
19. Western Methodist Recorder (Victoria), Nov. 1908, pp. 8, 11.
20. See Daily News-Advertiser (Vancouver), Nov. 26, 1908, pp. 1-2, and Spence, pp. 460-1.
21. Western Methodist Recorder (Victoria), Nov. 1908, p. 8.
22. Spence, p. 239.
23. Ibid., p. 465.
24. J.P. Gerrie, "Is Canada Going Wet?", American Review of Reviews, LXIX (1924), 64.
25. World (Vancouver), Aug. 11, 1916, p. 8.
26. Daily News-Advertiser (Vancouver), Feb. 3, 1909, pp. 1, 7.
27. Undated brochure is numbered 265/09, McBride Collection, Provincial Archives of British Columbia (PABC).
28. Vancouver Daily Province, Jan. 4, 1909, p. 10.
29. Ibid.
30. Daily Colonist, April 12, 1906, p. 3.
31. Ibid., Jan. 10, 1906, p. 6.
32. Letter of Lloyd A. Manly of Licensed Vintners Assoc., to McBride; Sept. 11, 1909, 858/09 of McBride Collection, PABC.
33. Letter of A.E. Watts to McBride, Oct. 28, 1909, 1021/09 of McBride Collection, PABC.
34. Adam Shortt and Arthur Doughty, eds., Canada and Its Provinces (23 vols.; Toronto: Glasgow, Brook & Co., 1914), IX, 253.
35. Paper 154/09 of McBride Collection, Provincial Archives of B.C. (PABC), Victoria, cited in Audrey Adams, "A Study of

the Use of Plebiscites and Referendums by the Province of British Columbia" (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Dept. of Economics and Political Science, University of British Columbia, 1958), p. 25.

36. World (Vancouver), March 5, 1909, p. 1. See also B.C., Journal, 1909, p. 98. The Gothenburg System was a liquor sales system begun in Sweden. Liquor outlets did not operate for a profit and the selling was done by government appointed managers.

37. Letter of E.B. Morgan to McBride, May 18, 1909, 265/09 of McBride Collection, PABC.

38. Letter of E.B. Morgan to McBride, June 1, 1909, 265/09 of McBride Collection, PABC.

39. Petition from North Vancouver Citizens to McBride 284/09 of McBride Collection, PABC. Letter from J.S. Henderson, Presbyterian minister to McBride, May 13, 1909, 494/09 of McBride Collection, PABC. The letter also refers to the gratitude of Methodists and Roman Catholics at the Premier's action.

40. Letter of H.J. Barber, Chilliwack, to McBride, May 16, 1909 and May 26, 1909, 475/09 of McBride Collection, PABC.

41. Letter of Spencer and Morgan to McBride, July 17, 1909, 265/09 of McBride Collection, PABC.

42. Letter of McBride to Spencer and Morgan, July 20, 1909, 265/09 of McBride Collection, PABC.

43. The LOL had asked that the plebiscite be held on a day other than on an election day but McBride explained in a private letter that to hold both votings together saved the government \$40,000. McBride to S.D. Chown, Methodist Church, Sept. 7, 1909, 800/09 of McBride Collection, PABC.

44. Diary of John A. Forin, Nelson, Judge of county court of West Kootenay, Nov. 25, 1909, PABC.

45. World (Vancouver), Nov. 20, 1909, p. 20.

46. Ibid., Nov. 23, 1909, p. 12.

47. Daily News-Advertiser (Vancouver), Nov. 23, 1909, p. 2.

48. Letter from Spencer to McBride, Oct. 29, 1909, 265/09 of McBride Collection, PABC.

49. Letter from McBride to Spencer, Nov. 1, 1909, 265/09 of McBride Collection, PABC.

50. World (Vancouver), Nov. 23, 1909, p. 12.

51. Daily News-Advertiser (Vancouver), Nov. 24, 1909.

52. Letter of Spencer to McBride, Nov. 18, 1909, 190/09 of McBride Collection, PABC.

53. Daily News-Advertiser (Vancouver), Jan. 24, 1910, in Adams, p. 38.

54. Letter from Spencer to McBride, Feb. 10, 1910, 286/10 of McBride Collection, PABC.

55. Daily Colonist (Victoria), Jan. 20, 1910, pp. 4, 7.

56. See J.C. Hopkins, ed., Canadian Annual Review (CAR), 1910, pp. 539-40 and letter of Spencer to McBride, Jan. 31, 1910, 292/10 of McBride Collection, PABC, cited in Adams, p. 227.

57. CAR, 1909, p. 582.

58. Letter of Spencer to McBride, June 1, 1910, 292/10 of McBride Collection, PABC.

59. Vancouver Daily Province, May 23, 1910, p. 2.

60. Ibid., March 2, 1912, p. 52.

61. CAR, 1912, p. 596, cited in Margaret Ormsby, British Columbia: a History (Macmillans in Canada, 1958), p. 361.

62. Spence, p. 397.

63. Ormsby, p. 377. It is possible that at the first call to battle the Anglican, British, and therefore wet element of the population went to war and left the drys in a stronger position. The many retired Imperial soldiers and Canadian veterans of the South African War who, Ormsby tells us (p. 375), "presented themselves forthwith," were undoubtedly opposed to prohibition. However, it is difficult to muster much evidence in support of the idea, interesting as it sounds. The Presbyterian and Methodist churches were quick to support the war effort as well, and their young men were strongly encouraged to join up. In any case, the drys had already demonstrated their strength in two previous plebiscites. For a numerical estimate of the "British" element in B.C. society, see Chap. I, note #58.

64. CAR, 1914, p. 218.

65. WCTU of B.C., Yearbook, 1915, p. 23.

66. Canada Food Board, B.C. Committee, Food Conservation Policy to be Observed (N.p., 1918), PABC.

67. Ormsby, p. 384.

68. World (Vancouver), Aug. 21, 1915, p. 1.

69. H.H. Walsh, The Christian Church in Canada (Toronto: Ryerson, 1956), p. 335.
70. Christian Guardian (Toronto), Feb. 17, 1915, p. 6.
71. CAR, 1903, p. 555.
72. Walsh, pp. 334-5.
73. Christian Guardian (Toronto), Sept. 15, 1915, p. 2.
74. Daily Colonist (Victoria), May 27, 1915, p. 7.
75. Ibid., Aug. 10, 1915.
76. World (Vancouver), May 19, 1915, p. 12 and CAR, 1917, p. 733.
77. Ibid., Aug. 10, 1915, p. 1.
78. Letter from Jas. G. Lawson to McBride, Aug. 11, 1915, McBride Collection, PABC, cited in Walter E. Ellis, "Some Aspects of Religion in British Columbia Politics," (Unpublished M.A. thesis, Dept. of Political Science, University of British Columbia, 1959), p. 118.
79. Christian Guardian (Toronto), Sept. 15, 1915, p. 2.
80. World (Vancouver), Aug. 24, 1915, p. 12.
81. Ibid., Aug. 25, 1915, p. 6.
82. Ibid., Aug. 27, 1915, p. 12 and Spence, p. 467.
83. Unsigned, undated letter from PPA to Rev. J.F. Miller, Penticton, People's Prohibition Association (PPA) Papers, Alcohol Research and Educational Council (AREC), Vancouver.
84. Ibid.
85. Christian Guardian (Toronto), Oct. 6, 1915, p. 9.
86. Daily News-Advertiser (Vancouver) May 9, 1916), p. 2.
87. Ormsby, p. 393.
88. Ellis, p. 112.
89. World (Vancouver), Nov. 9, 1915, p. 1 and CAR, 1915, pp. 734-5.
90. CAR, 1915, p. 735.
91. CAR, 1916, p. 770.

92. Victoria Daily Times, Feb. 1, 1916, p. 13.
93. CAR, 1916, p. 755.
94. Daily News-Advertiser (Vancouver), March 1, 1916, p. 1.
95. Ibid., March 14, 1916, p. 10.
96. Ibid.
97. CAR, 1916, p. 770.
98. Daily News-Advertiser (Vancouver), March 24, 1916.
99. PPA Minutes, Feb. 12, and April 14, 1916, AREC.
100. B.C. Federationist (Vancouver), March 24, 1916, p. 2.
101. Victoria Daily Times, Aug. 16, 1917, p.13.
102. B.C. Federationist (Vancouver), Sept. 8, 1916, p. 19.
103. Ibid., Jan. 14, 1916, p. 2.
104. Ibid.
105. PPA Minutes, Feb. 12, 1916, AREC.
106. World (Vancouver), Aug. 15, 1916, p. 6.
107. Daily News-Advertiser (Vancouver), April 8, 1916, p. 3, cited in Ellis, p. 118.
108. Daily Colonist (Victoria), Aug. 29, 1916, p. 1.
109. Inland Sentinel (Kamloops), March 10, 1916, p. 4.
110. CAR, 1915, p. 734.
111. Victoria Daily Times, May 20, 1916, p. 11.
112. Daily News-Advertiser (Vancouver), April 1, 1916, p. 6.
113. CAR, 1916, p. 770. In 1916 it was rumored that the Lieutenant-Governor refused to sign the message to the legislature introducing the prohibition act unless Bowser gave his verbal assurance that if the act was carried by referendum the government would at least set up a commission to investigate the compensation question. It is now known that the rumor was true. See undated, uncatalogued paper, Patullo collection, PABC, cited in Adams, p. 185 n.

114. Daily Colonist (Victoria), May 23, 1916, p. 1 and Alfred Lewis, Facts and Figures Against Prohibition (Edmonds: Burnaby Printing Co., n.d.), p. 28.

115. Daily News-Advertiser (Vancouver), May 12, 1916, p. 1.

116. Victoria Daily Times, April 14, 1916, p. 16.

117. Daily Colonist (Victoria), May 24, 1916, p. 1.

118. CAR, 1916, p. 771.

119. B.C., Journal, 1916, p. 158.

120. Daily Colonist (Victoria), August 17, 1916, p. 11.

121. Victoria Daily Times, July 31, 1916, p. 8.

122. CAR, 1917, p. 826.

123. World (Vancouver), Aug. 3, 1916.

124. Message to B.C. Soldiers from H.C. Brewster, Liberal leader, and Sir C.H. Tupper, UBC, Howay-Reid Collection, Tupper Papers, cited in Ormsby, p. 393.

125. Spence, p. 480.

126. World (Vancouver), Sept. 13, 1916, p. 2.

127. Vancouver Daily Sun, Aug. 31, 1916 in Adams, pp. 70-1.

128. World (Vancouver), Aug. 10, 1916, p. 10 and Inland Sentinel (Kamloops), March 9, 1916, p. 1.

129. J.S. Moir, "Sinners and Saints. A true story of early days in the farthest West, by an Old Timer," (Victoria: mimeographed, 1947), pp. 140-1.

130. World (Vancouver), Aug. 5, 1916, p. 13.

131. Daily Colonist (Victoria), Sept. 13, 1916, p. 2. The parade in Victoria included about 2000 persons, including many boys and girls carrying placards which read "Lead us not into Temptation" and "For our sakes vote Dry."

132. PPA Minutes, July 27, 1916, AREC.

133. Interview with J.S. Peden, personnel manager, Labatt's Lucky Lager, New Westminster, June 4, 1968. Liquor wholesalers also helped financially by allowing retailers to defer payment of outstanding accounts for long periods, but they sometimes charged 8% interest on the overdue balances. See the experience of one hotelkeeper in Victoria Daily Times, May 20, 1916, p. 11.



134. PPA Minutes, April 10, 1916, AREC.
135. World (Vancouver), Sept. 11, 1916, p. 4.
136. PPA Minutes, Feb. 5, 1916, AREC.
137. Daily News-Advertiser (Vancouver), Sept. 2, 1916, p. 1.
138. World (Vancouver), Aug. 10, 1916, p. 6.
139. Daily News-Advertiser (Vancouver), May 9, 1916, p. 2.
140. World (Vancouver), Aug. 19, 1916, p. 14.
141. Lewis, pp. 27-9.
142. World (Vancouver), Sept. 2, 1916, p. 1.
143. William G. McLoughlin, Modern Revivalism, Charles Grandison Finney to Billy Graham (New York: Ronald Press, 1959), p. 402.
144. World (Vancouver), Aug. 11, 1916, p. 8.
145. Ibid., and Daily News-Advertiser (Vancouver), August 11, 1916.
146. B.C. Federationist (Vancouver), August 18, 1916, p. 1.
147. Lewis, p. 35.
148. CAR, 1916, p. 781.
149. Daily Colonist (Victoria), March 31, 1917, p. 5.
150. World (Vancouver), March 30, 1917, p. 1.
151. Letter of N. Wolverson to Brewster, March 28, 1917, Brewster Papers, PABC, cited in Ellis, p. 125.
152. Letter from Brewster to G.O. Buchanan, Port Haney, April 24, 1917, Brewster Papers, PABC, cited in Ellis, p. 125.
153. Daily Colonist (Victoria), August 14, 1917, p. 3.
154. Victoria Daily Times, March 24, 1917, p. 4.
155. B.C., Journal, 1917, pp. 199-200.
156. World (Vancouver), Sept. 29, 1917, p. 6.
157. Vancouver Daily Province, Oct. 1, 1917, p. 12.

## CHAPTER III

### THE REPEAL OF PROHIBITION

The British Columbia Prohibition Act was carried in the referendum largely because it was aimed not at the drinking of liquor, but at the liquor traffic. The liquor traffic was the logical target of a campaign emphasizing, in patriotic tones, the economic benefits of its elimination. Prohibition was thus only partial because people of the province were legally permitted to import liquor although only for home consumption.

Die-hard prohibitionists viewed the Act as but a positive step in the direction of complete bone-dry prohibition. "We will never be satisfied," stated a Presbyterian prohibitionist in 1920, "while liquor is manufactured anywhere in our land."<sup>1</sup>

A federal order-in-council, effective April 1, 1918, gave the prohibitionists pretty well the kind of prohibition they desired. The Dominion Alliance lobbied persistently in Ottawa for the passage of an anti-importation measure but there is not much reason to feel that this pressure was decisive in the government's action. The demands of the war were of prime consideration and therefore all importation of liquor into provinces already preventing sale was prohibited for a period lasting at least until one year after the war ended. The order-in-council made British Columbia officially a "dry" province until January 1, 1920, when importation was again

permitted. One can therefore legitimately speak of a time of complete prohibition in the province.

Prohibition greatly curtailed but did not eliminate the manufacturing and retailing of beverages with an alcoholic content. Nor did prohibition remove the liquor bar even though liquor could no longer be served legally. The prohibition act defined liquor as a beverage containing more than 2½% of proof spirits and this definition provided a loophole for breweries to produce near-beer and the product made by British Columbia Breweries was called "Beerless". Beerless contained 2% proof spirits and 1% alcohol while the now illegal regular beer had contained 10% proof spirits and 5% alcohol.<sup>2</sup>

Many of the 700 licensed premises in the province affected by the prohibition act hoped that a demand for near-beer would enable them to continue operation. On Monday, October 1, 1917, the bars of sixty of the sixty-nine hotels in Vancouver were opened for business and most of the forty-seven Victoria hotels expected to keep operating as rooming houses and as soft drink and near-beer emporiums, but in Nanaimo it was "generally felt" that of eighteen hotels only two or three would be able to continue in business.<sup>3</sup> No restrictions existed regarding the sale of near-beer and hotel-keepers, who already had the facilities, demanded the sole right to sell the drink and promised to cooperate with the authorities in the enforcement of the prohibition act since the elimination of bootlegging would benefit hotel sales but in this request the hotelmen were unsuccessful.<sup>4</sup> Hotelmen were placed in an increasingly difficult position and

inevitably hotel accommodation costs increased and, the claims of prohibitionists to the contrary, the standard of hotel management declined.<sup>5</sup> Near-beer gained a certain amount of popularity and hotels soon faced competition in the sale of the drink from smaller establishments located at strategic points and called jitney bars. For the laboring man who, although he probably would have preferred something stronger than near-beer, nevertheless liked a glass or two with his friends on his way home from work, it was, ironically enough, not prohibition but complete government control of the sale of liquor that effectively closed down the bar in 1921.

Sale of near-beer was a boon to the breweries of the province, and in the words of the prohibition commissioner these establishments continued to be "fairly active."<sup>6</sup> Importation of liquor was permitted by the prohibition act and local brewers could participate in this market by establishing warehouses outside the boundaries of the province but the federal anti-importation measure stopped this practice. Another legitimate sales outlet was through government vendors and druggists. However many brewers were unable to sell enough of their products to stay afloat financially and were forced to cease operations.

A leading brewery manager stated many years later that in the period prior to prohibition there had been too many breweries and that this had resulted in a time of very severe competition.<sup>7</sup> For the breweries that survived, prohibition had proved to be a blessing in disguise because by it the "competitive hazard" was reduced and the tone of the industry "elevated."<sup>8</sup> Of course it

is unlikely that a brewer who went bankrupt would have described events in quite the same way. There was only one distillery in the province at this time and it suspended operations only during the time when the federal war measure was in force, and resumed distilling immediately thereafter.<sup>9</sup>

As a result of prohibition substantial losses were incurred in all parts of the liquor industry and these losses led to another movement for compensation in 1920. This time the movement was led not by brewers and hotelmen but by the creditors and liquidators of various bankrupt hotel and warehousing businesses.<sup>10</sup> Premier John Oliver set up a Royal Commission to investigate the compensation claims, but the commission ruled against any compensation and this closed the matter.<sup>11</sup>

(In the aftermath of World War I, disillusionment set in about the inevitability of moral progress in Canadian society. Belief in moral progress had fostered the progressive reform movement of which prohibition had been a part.) "We have lived for a generation or more in a fool's paradise," wrote a Canadian clergyman. "We have trusted in the objective reality of all human advancement; in the gradual but certain elimination of our brute inheritance; . . ." <sup>12</sup> [As faith in moral progress declined so did the appeal of moralistic arguments. With the war over prohibitionists were forced more and more to speak in moralistic terms but much of the public that had voted for the Prohibition Act in 1916 was no longer interested and prohibition began to be looked upon not as a progressive but as a reactionary system.) When British Columbians were again given

an opportunity to express their opinion on the Prohibition Act in a referendum, the act had become pretty well identified with prohibition per se and the people voted against it. It was evident to the general public by that time that the authorities either could not or would not enforce the Act and so prohibition was discredited as a viable system. ( But much more fundamental was the fact that for the majority of British Columbians the drinking of liquor was an ingrained and respectable social custom of long standing and while many were willing to sacrifice the custom in time of war, public sympathy to prohibition, so necessary to reinforce prohibition law, was withdrawn when the war ended. ) Research into prohibition experiments has shown that in the

absence of reinforcing public opinion the application of coercive controls seldom has succeeded. Even the most severe punishments, such as death among the Aztecs and exile to Siberia in Russia failed to abolish bootlegging in those societies.<sup>13</sup>

In recent studies on alcoholism in North America it has been found that, by and large, the upper classes place no moral value on drinking whatever. And if the highest people socially do not taboo drinking, their social customs will outlast legislative controls restricting the drinking of liquor and these customs will gradually sift downward to the upper middle classes and others who are trying to emulate the upper classes.<sup>14</sup> So it was in British Columbia. Colonel E.G. Prior of Victoria, provincial premier from 1902 until 1903 and Lieutenant-Governor from 1919 until 1920, openly opposed prohibition as did Conservative politicians like W.J. Bowser and R.H. Pooley, and leading

clergymen of the Anglican church. Because of the loose wording of the Prohibition Act judges repeatedly threw out cases involving breaches of the act, and the government was forced to define and re-define the terms in it. Even so, judges continued to act in such a benevolent manner toward offenders that a strong suspicion existed that they were simply unsympathetic toward the act and prohibitionists claimed to see liquor men continually moving behind the scenes. The leader of the opposition charged that the administration of the liquor law was so lax as to constitute a public scandal.<sup>15</sup> In Fernie, in 1919 a Judge Thompson quashed the convictions of eight hotel-keepers and bartenders in connection with violations of the prohibition act. The general secretary of the PPA then complained to the government prohibition commissioner.

Permit me to ask through you, why this abnormal miscarriage [sic] of Justice? Are we going to permit such actions? Who is responsible for such flagrant violations in the putting into force the judgment of the court? Grave results may follow such trifling with justice.<sup>16</sup>

To prohibitionists justice now meant a literal carrying out of the prohibition law, whether in accord with the wishes of the people or not. Prohibitionists can be forgiven for a lack of prophetic ability, for if their ideal of a dry utopia proved in reality to be unenforceable, they were not alone in feeling that prohibition had come to stay. Even anti-prohibitionists like Stephen Leacock published a letter in the Colonist in which he stated unhappily that from prohibition "there is no return. The door of the beer cellar is locked and the key is thrown away."<sup>17</sup>

Prohibition began October 1, 1917 but winning the war remained the central preoccupation of the people of British Columbia. John Nelson gave prohibition credit for the apparent sales records set by Vancouver retail merchants at Christmas, 1917, but of course the more grandiose economic improvements promised by prohibitionists were slower in coming. A number of jails were closed for lack of prisoners and prohibitionists took credit for this bit of social betterment as well. One of the main reasons that businessmen had supported wartime prohibition was to release extra money for the sale of war bonds and no one denied that the Victory Bond campaign in British Columbia was a smashing success. The unsigned copy of a letter sent to a former Australian cabinet minister stated that

Vancouver and the Province went over the top -- far exceeding what was asked for from us. There were 55,373 applications for bonds, totaling \$36,411,915.00. One in every seven in the Province bought a bond, while the average amount per capita for the Province was \$90.15, and this came from the general public not from a few monied men. It was generally admitted the objective was attained because of Prohibition.<sup>18</sup>

It was the war that dominated economic and social conditions in the province before November, 1918, while the necessity of returning to a peacetime economy was the determining factor in British Columbia society after the armistice.

Many thousands of soldiers returned to the province after the war. The experiences they had had in Europe, both in battle and while on leave, hardly conditioned them to an environment devoid of the pleasures of liquor and many soldiers bitterly resented prohibition which they claimed had been foisted on the people of British Columbia while the soldiers were gone.



Prohibitionists had noted the poor support their cause received from soldiers even before they went overseas.<sup>19</sup> Now returned sons of certain prominent Methodist and Presbyterian families publicly denounced prohibition.<sup>20</sup> A delegation that claimed to represent 33,000 war veterans called on Premier Oliver and asked for the end to prohibition.<sup>21</sup> Because of the post-war economic slowdown, returning soldiers were unable to find employment and suffered a "deep sense of rejection."<sup>22</sup> Veterans banded together in clubs and complained about the prohibition act over glasses of near-beer and more probably, the "real stuff."

Businessmen, too, had reason to rethink their stand on prohibition. The province of British Columbia was in poor financial condition throughout the war and the unsettled economic state of Europe after the war only made matters worse. When John Oliver took over as provincial premier in 1918 after the death of H.C. Brewster the provincial debt stood at \$21,000,000 and railway bond guarantees amounted to another \$64,000,000.<sup>23</sup> The city of Vancouver was also in financial difficulty and in 1919 the city council seriously discussed the feasibility of a one per cent tax on all incomes in the city, a tax which, it was estimated, would bring a \$300,000 annual revenue to city coffers.<sup>24</sup> Also for the first time, it was decided to tax city residents on property improvements.<sup>25</sup> A special tax study, approved by city council, stated that 50% of the net profits of liquor sold in Vancouver, should go to the city, rather than to the provincial government.<sup>26</sup> As businessmen pondered the financial predicament

of their province the example of Quebec came to their attention. Quebec was the one province in Canada in which complete prohibition never took effect. As prohibition came into effect in the United States, the businessmen of British Columbia and elsewhere in Canada watched with interest the large number of American tourists flocking into Quebec and the amount of tax-saving dollars they left behind them.<sup>27</sup>

The referendum of 1916 had been carried through on patriotic slogans and cries of wartime prohibition. Many businessmen had supported it for reasons of economic efficiency but when the war ended they withdrew their support and some of them began to see in the return of the liquor industry a solution to the problem of unemployment and a way to reduce the burdens of provincial and local taxation.<sup>28</sup> The emphasis on wartime prohibition now returned to haunt the prohibitionists. The federal government had always maintained that the anti-importation law was only a wartime measure and when the law was rescinded effective January 1, 1920 despite the protestations of the Dominion Alliance, it was a signal that the prohibitionists were losing their grip. At the same time, the federal government made provision that provinces could remain bone-dry if they so desired. It would only require that the provincial government request the federal government to hold a provincial plebiscite on the question. In any case, the federal action early in 1920 forced the provinces to review their liquor laws and made necessary public participation in any changes.

By 1920 British Columbians were of a mind to review the Prohibition Act not only because it was a nuisance to a man

wanting a drink but because it had proven ineffectual. Newspapers bore testimony almost daily that the act was being blatantly violated and that excesses were possible even by those operating within the terms of the act. (In 1917 enforcement of the act was left to the municipalities) and no special assistance monies were provided by the provincial government. Illicitly-sold liquor confiscated by municipalities had to be returned to provincial authorities who then sold it, at a clear profit, through government vendors.<sup>29</sup> Late in 1918 the provincial government recognized the need for a more efficient administration of the act and a prohibition commissioner was appointed. The commissioner's office quickly became the clearing house for all manner of complaints, particularly from the PPA, about violations of the act but the commissioner only passed this information along to the municipalities concerned and played no part in the enforcement of the act in organized municipalities. His main task was to administer, according to the act, the purchase and sale of alcohol and alcoholic beverages for government vendors who in turn sold it to doctors, druggists, clergymen and manufacturers.

(To municipalities then, which had already been deprived of the revenue from liquor licenses, was left the formidable task of enforcement of the act.) Larger centres, like Vancouver, used a special task force known as the "dry squad" to carry out the act in that city and municipalities made an attempt to enforce the act, even to the extent of suspending police officials for negligence in carrying out their duties but it quickly became

apparent that effective enforcement of the act at reasonable cost was impossible.<sup>30</sup> Mayor Gale of Vancouver complained to John Oliver that the cost of enforcing prohibition in his city was above \$100,000 annually.<sup>31</sup> In Grand Forks, a special public meeting was called under the auspices of the police commissioners and attended by many citizens. It was decided to send a wire to Victoria urging the creation of a provincial police to undertake the policing of the city because the "menace of illicit liquor traffic" was beyond the control of the local authorities.<sup>32</sup>

The sale of near-beer in bars and of liquor in drugstores and government stores, while legal, brought the system of prohibition into disrepute because such sales degenerated so easily into questionable practices. With the passing of liquor licensing, there was no restriction on the sale of near-beer and eventually the government began to receive complaints about the unregulated use of the drink. Also, if a hotelkeeper was caught selling real beer, but claimed he had bought it as near-beer, the courts found it difficult to prosecute him since the fault, then, if the hotelkeeper was honest, lay with the brewer who had the testing equipment.<sup>33</sup> Attorney-general Farris stated that

there has been a very general demand from the municipalities of the province that power be given them to license and regulate these places. At the present time, there are no restrictions whatever against the sale of near beer, and I am sorry to say that in these unrestricted sales the beer has a way of becoming a good deal nearer than it should be. There is nothing to prevent even the youngest boys and girls from purchasing and drinking near beer in any of the places vending soft drinks.<sup>34</sup>

Like near-beer, flavouring extracts and patent medicines containing alcohol began to sell unusually well at this time. J. Sclater voiced his concern about the widespread use of extracts in his commissioner's report for 1920. Curiously enough, one of those who was alleged to be profiting from the sudden boom in extract sales was W.H. Malkin, a staunch prohibitionist. It was stated in the legislature that the use of Malkin's extract, known as Malkin's Best, produced a peculiar effect called "jazzy jag" on the user.<sup>35</sup>

Druggists and government vendors sold liquor only to persons who were ill and who had obtained a prescription form signed by a doctor to prove it. Doctors charged about two dollars for the diagnosis and service of making out the prescription (and it was reported that one unscrupulous physician issued 4100 prescriptions in a single month while four others issued over 1000 each.<sup>36</sup> The influenza epidemic of December, 1918, contributed significantly to the volume of liquor sales, but even after the epidemic was over, sales scarcely decreased. During 1919, liquor was apparently necessary for the cure of 181,350 individual cases of illness in Vancouver alone.<sup>37</sup> John Oliver's secretary described sale by prescription in these terms:

This system led to wide abuse. Toward Christmas especially it looked as if an epidemic of colds and colics had struck the country like a plague. In Vancouver queues a quarter of a mile long could be seen waiting their turn to enter the liquor stores to get prescriptions filled. Hindus, Chinese, and Japanese varied the lines of the afflicted of many races. It was kaleidoscopic procession waiting in the rain for a replenishment that would drive the

chills away; and it was alleged that several doctors needed a little alcoholic liniment to soothe the writer's cramp caused by inditing their signatures at two dollars per line.<sup>38</sup>

The weaknesses of the liquor by prescription method were tragically illustrated when a returned soldier died in Victoria from the effects of consuming a quart of prescription rum.<sup>39</sup> A prohibition delegation immediately called on John Oliver demanding that offending doctors be prosecuted. The doctors themselves became concerned about their declining prestige and sent representatives to a meeting with Attorney General Farris late in 1919. Farris stated flatly that the prescription system was being abused to sell liquor camouflaged as medicine and so the doctors demanded a new or revised liquor act.<sup>40</sup> Amendments to the Prohibition Act checked some of the abuses of the prescription system. Pads of printed, serially numbered prescriptions were sent to doctors so that some record could be kept by the government and the number of prescriptions for liquor a doctor could issue in a single month was reduced to one hundred. In 1920 the amount druggists were allowed to issue to any prescription holder, except one who lived more than five miles away from the nearest liquor vendor, was limited to eight ounces. Attempts were made to circumvent these regulations and some prescription forms were even counterfeited but some reduction in the sale of prescription liquor was effected and by April, 1920, at least nine doctors had faced prosecution in connection with liquor prescription irregularities.<sup>41</sup>

The rigamarole of the prescription system and the delay involved in importation made for a situation that played into

the hands of the bootlegger. Bootlegging had existed before prohibition and continued thereafter but with the unusually high profits possible under a dry regime, more men than ever were attracted to the profession.

As early as January, 1918, hotelkeepers who were trying to eke out a living from the sale of near-beer complained that bootleggers in and around Vancouver were flourishing.<sup>42</sup> Bootleggers, like ordinary citizens, were able to take advantage of importation and it was reported that \$40,000 worth of liquor was imported into one cellar.<sup>43</sup> It was also possible to manufacture one's own liquor and the PPA knew of at least 121 stills seized by the authorities between October, 1917 and March, 1920. Right in downtown Vancouver two stills were discovered and were described as the "most ambitious moonshine distilleries ever found in or around Vancouver."<sup>44</sup> Bootleggers showed a fine ingenuity in marketing their products. Some saloons in Victoria kept a pitcher of liquor near the sink and if a detective appeared the contents were simply poured out, or water was added to the liquor to put its liquor content below the 2½% limit.<sup>45</sup> Others transported whiskey by securing bottles underneath floating logs. In December of 1920, the Vancouver dry squad raided 108 bootleggers' joints, 18 disorderly houses and collected \$9,750 in liquor fines.<sup>46</sup> The seizure of huge quantities of alcoholic beverages presented the already harrassed police with the huge task of moving the liquor to government premises and police advertisements appeared in the newspaper requesting help. On one occasion the consideration offered to

helpers was a "dollar an hour and free wine smells."<sup>47</sup> Inevitably bad liquor found its way into the illicit market as well and newspapers occasionally reported deaths that resulted from drinking it. Brewers were also caught attempting to funnel their products into the bootleg market. In 1920 the Union Brewing Company of Nanaimo was fined \$1000 for selling real beer despite that company's protests that the offending beverage was thought to be near-beer. Likewise the Canadian Pacific Wine Company was convicted of selling liquor unlawfully, fined \$1000 and its entire stock valued at \$237,000 was seized by the government.

With such staggering amounts of money at stake, bootleggers used bribery to protect themselves. In a sensational case it was discovered that the influence of the bootlegger extended to high places. Late in 1918 it was disclosed that after only a few months in office, the first prohibition commissioner, W.C. Findlay, had succumbed to the financial temptations apparent in the bootlegging business and become involved in it himself. The case was an intense embarrassment to prohibitionists for Findlay had been a leading member of the PPA in 1916 and had been recommended by that organization for the post of prohibition commissioner. Findlay subsequently was fined \$1000 for refusing to answer any questions in court and he also spent two years in the penitentiary. A number of prominent citizens were involved in the case and at least two of them left for the United States. Mayor Gale announced that because of police laxity apparent in the affair, the whole



Vancouver police force would be reorganized "from top to bottom."<sup>48</sup> Day by day gross violations and circumventions of the prohibition act came to the attention of the people and made the whole prohibition system a public stench. Prohibitionists could quote figures to prove that crime was actually decreasing but the sensationalism attending the crimes committed in violation of the prohibition act created the opposite public impression.<sup>49</sup>

After the defeat of prohibition in the referendum of 1920 some prohibitionists blamed themselves for laxity. A dry wrote that, following the success in 1916, "we . . . sat down and went to sleep."<sup>50</sup> It was true that a relaxation of prohibitionist activity occurred after prohibition became a reality and a number of WCTU locals disbanded but the leaders of the most influential prohibition organization, the PPA, never "fell asleep" for a moment. With provincial prohibition won, the PPA was approached by the Rev. James G. Shearer and asked to join the Social Service Council.<sup>51</sup> Shearer suggested that the PPA could help bring about Dominion prohibition and work on other social problems such as child welfare and the suppression of venereal disease but the PPA refused, preferring to confine its efforts to British Columbia and to prohibition.

The PPA felt that it had fathered prohibition and was determined to prove that a dry regime was feasible. So many benefits had been promised as natural results of prohibition that prohibitionists felt a moral obligation to prove that

the kind of society they wanted was possible. Thus the PPA adopted an alert defensive stance. An attack on the prohibition act or on prohibition was treated as a personal attack by prohibitionists and promptly refuted. As the frequent violations of the prohibition act aroused public indignation the PPA had one essential answer: all that was needed to make prohibition a success was enforcement of the laws. The public was requested to help. "It must be regarded as a national obligation resting on all good citizens to assist in the enforcement of prohibition laws which were enacted following a direct mandate of the people," said D.N. McLachlin of the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions and Social Service.<sup>52</sup> The attempt to equate a good citizen with an informer met with no public acceptance and the PPA itself was forced to become the chief watch-dog of prohibition.

The paid staff of the PPA now carried the main responsibility of prohibitionist work. The executive committee still included many of the same businessmen as members -- John Nelson, Jonathan Rogers, Dr. R. Telford -- and still met fairly often but the fund-raising, propaganda and investigation work was placed into the hands of the Rev. W.G.W. Fortune, executive secretary.

Despite the professionalization of prohibition work, prohibition retained considerable public support. In March, 1919,

the PPA called for another convention which, according to the World, "in numbers, enthusiasm, vigor of utterance and aggressive fighting spirit it eclipsed any gathering yet held."<sup>53</sup> Five or six hundred delegates attended and passed resolutions calling for Dominion prohibition, better enforcement of the present provincial act and an eight ounce limit on liquor prescriptions. A \$10,000 budget was called for to continue the prohibition cause but as in 1918 when total revenue was only \$2500, large amounts of money did not come in and W. Fortune had a difficult time raising enough money for salaries, running expenses and rent which Jonathan Rogers now saw fit to impose on the PPA offices.

The PPA appointed itself the watch-dog of prohibition. With the help of prohibitionists throughout the province, informers, busybodies and paid detectives, the PPA kept a close eye on the operation of the prohibition act. Quantities of liquor coming into the province were closely watched, as James Sclater, the prohibition commissioner, was informed.

We are in a position to know when any liquor comes in unless it is shipped under false manifest and will keep you posted as to their coming.<sup>54</sup>

The almost single-handed effort by the PPA to ensure the enforcement of prohibition laws boggles the mind. To hard-core prohibitionists the end of prohibition meant the defeat of their ascetic world-view which they held to be the ideal for all of society. Prohibitionists failed to see that simple solutions like prohibition, rather than solving social problems in an increasingly complex and urbanized society, only created new

ones. Tandberg could have had prohibitionists in mind when he acidly described those who held that "if the God of progress is neglecting his duty, as he evidently is there is but one thing to do -- enforce him!"<sup>55</sup>

In any case, when prohibition came, the PPA went right to work to make sure that everyone understood what the prohibition act meant and then obeyed it. In January, 1918, a letter went out to a fish canning company requesting that the management pass the message of prohibition along to Chinese and Japanese employees who might not have fully understood.<sup>56</sup>

Literally scores of letters were written and received by the PPA in attempts to detect violations and violators of the prohibition act. It is important to realize to what lengths the PPA went to support the prohibition act and four excerpts from the correspondence of the organization are shown to emphasize the point. The first letter is from an informer in Armstrong.

I understand that when you were here last you stated to the Prohibition Committee that if there was any suspicion that the Prohibition law was being broken, you would send someone to look into the case. From what I have seen lately I am of the opinion that a chinaman has a supply of booze. . . . I have no proof of any liquor being handled but to say the least this chinaman's actions are shady.<sup>57</sup>

A more specific tip-off came from Penticton.

Last week . . . a whole carload of whiskey has been shipped in here, . . . & he (a Mr. Abbott) had it hauled and put into the cellar of his private residence (over 600 cases). Now of course we know others are interested in this & . . . much of it no doubt will go to the Southern Okanagan, where the camps are.

I was wondering if this is not a good opportunity to have a private detective sent here, for most of us have no confidence in our Chief of Police.<sup>58</sup>

Information received by letter or by word-of-mouth was forwarded by the PPA to the prohibition commissioner as a letter to J. Sclater indicates. The town under consideration is Alberni.

At the Eating House and Ark Hotel guests ask for beer and openly say "we do not want the 2½%, we want the real thing." The answer was "I have the real stuff," and they were supplied with the same.

Trusting you will be able to do something to minimise this evil and to bring the guilty parties to justice.<sup>59</sup>

Sclater dutifully replied that

it is not a matter for great surprise that drunkenness is rife at Alberni when liquor can be imported into the Province by any private individual who cares to do so in any quantity he pleases. Drunkenness is, I am sorry to say, not confined to Alberni and so long as the present Act remains in effect I do not see how drunkenness is to be prevented.

. . . I would point out to you that it is not a difficult matter to delude any person into the belief that 2½% beer is the "real stuff"; if I may so put it, it is one of the "tricks of the trade" of those who deal in near beer. . . .<sup>60</sup>

The PPA felt that municipal authorities simply were not showing sufficient zeal in enforcing prohibition and carried on a verbal battle with the community police forces. The police claimed that they were hamstrung by laws that did not permit them to search persons or premises without a warrant, or to obtain evidence by acting as civilians looking for bootleg liquor. Prohibitionists urged the use of "stool pigeons" to overcome these legal handicaps.<sup>61</sup> Police and public officials became increasingly sensitive to PPA criticisms. Mayor Todd

of Victoria asked the drys to stop just criticizing and to begin helping in the situation.<sup>62</sup> In Vancouver, Inspector Sutherland denied claims by the drys that the police force was lax.<sup>63</sup> For their part the PPA attempted to influence local elections in favor of men thought more determined to enforce the law.<sup>64</sup> The association also occasionally hired private detectives and encouraged the prohibition commissioner to do likewise. Sclater rejected the suggestion. By 1920 Sclater was convinced that the prohibition act was ineffective. An act that necessitated the use of tale-bearers and paid informers for its enforcement was not worth keeping.

Sclater's critical view of the prohibition act was in accord with a growing number of government members. John Oliver, who had supported prohibition in 1916 said, "I have never been drunk in my life and am no friend of the liquor traffic but I have lived long enough to know that prohibition cannot be enforced in British Columbia in the present state of public feeling."<sup>65</sup> Even before the federal government revoked the anti-importation measure, talk began in the legislature about a complete review of liquor legislation in the province. The Findlay case, early in 1919, produced rumours that a major change in the prohibition act was coming and a delegation visited Oliver in March to petition for a change away from prohibition, but the premier was non-committal.<sup>66</sup> Later in the year Attorney-General Farris hinted that because of abuses, the act had to be changed and that a referendum was likely.<sup>67</sup> Early in 1920 the Liberal government talked only about further restric-

tions in the existing act but dissatisfaction with the act quickly came into the open. In seconding the address in reply to the speech from the throne, W.H. Sutherland, Liberal member from Revelstoke, suggested that the question be again submitted to the people with clear-cut alternatives -- bone-dry legislation or government control of the sale of liquor.<sup>68</sup> Mrs. Ralph Smith, whose late husband had supported prohibition in the past and who now sat in the legislature as an Independent, supported the idea of a referendum and another member, J.S. Cowper, who had supported prohibition previously, now stated that the act was a failure and that he opposed its retention as law.<sup>69</sup> Only George Bell, a sturdy Methodist prohibitionist, persisted in his claim that the present act was producing beneficial results such as reducing crime and that no referendum was needed, only better law enforcement. He was particularly opposed to government control, stating that "I hope the day will never come when the people and government of this province will seek to make a profit out of the suffering and degradation of others."<sup>70</sup>

A few days after this statement was made a delegation of about fifty persons from the PPA called on the premier and made an incredible demand. The PPA wanted nothing less than the replacement of the present administrators of the prohibition act by three independent commissioners who would be allotted special powers. The new administration would be

removed from the ordinary machinery of government with a board of outstanding citizens in charge, controlling their own legal and police machinery.<sup>71</sup>

In the face of this request it was evident to the government

that there was little further to discuss with the PPA and talk about the referendum increased.

Hammering out the terms of the referendum delayed any official government announcement on the subject, though it must be confessed that the delay was not caused by any government desire to make the terms as lucid as possible. At the end of March Attorney General Farris stated that a referendum would definitely be held, probably in August. Early in April the official wording of the referendum ballot was released. Voters would be asked

Which do you prefer?

1. The present prohibition act.

2. An act to provide for the government control and sale in sealed packages of spiritous and malt liquors?<sup>72</sup>

An aura of novelty surrounded the idea of government control which the government did not remove by any further clarification. Prohibitionists opposed government control because it would put the government in the liquor business which they considered disreputable but in fact the government was already in it and the profits derived from liquor sales by prescription had been substantial and probably played a part in the evolution of the idea of government control.<sup>73</sup> George Bell at the instigation of the PPA attempted to head off government control as an alternative on the referendum ballot by moving that the British Columbia government take advantage of the federal bone-dry law provision but his motion was lost in amendments that followed.



With the terms of the referendum before the public, the Liberal government emphasized that it was not taking sides on the question. "I can't discuss Prohibition from a personal angle," said John Oliver, "because it would look as if I spoke for the Government and the Government is chiefly anxious to have the unassisted view of the people on the matter."<sup>74</sup> There was, however, little doubt as to which side the Liberals were on. The party had supported prohibition in a number of previous elections and this support was now withdrawn. In Kamloops the premier warned that if the act carried in the referendum, law enforcement difficulties would become such that the provincial government might have to create its own police force.<sup>75</sup> Government control had the support of a new political pressure group called the Moderation League and it was this group rather than the PPA that now had the ear of the government. A voter on the referendum was faced with choosing between a discredited prohibition act and an untried and undefined system called government control. Outside the legislature agitation in favor of new liquor legislation resulted in the re-organization of the Moderation League (ML) in 1920. The ML first came into existence early in 1919. Moderationists claimed they did not want a return to wide-open drinking conditions but that it was obvious that prohibition was detrimental to the "best interests" of society, both "socially and economically."<sup>76</sup> Instead of bars, the ML advocated the sale of light wine and beer with meals at restaurants and the sale of liquor only through government stores. A moderationist deputation visited

the premier in March, 1919, and asked for another referendum on the liquor question, but the premier replied that no referendum would be held for the time being.<sup>77</sup> Moderationists grew more and more disgusted by the interference of the PPA and prohibition laws in what they held to be private matters and early in 1920 the Moderation League emerged with a new vigor. On February 4 a letter appeared in the newspapers signed by Charles Wilson, a prominent Vancouver lawyer, calling on all "those who realize the danger to liberty" to organize and

bring such pressure to bear upon the provincial legislature that in the referendum to be submitted to the people, there shall be given to them the opportunity to say whether a sane, temperate and safe law shall be placed upon the statute books, giving the provincial government a mandate to sell liquor. . . .<sup>78</sup>

This rallying call reactivated the Moderation League.

Henry O. Bell-Irving, a prosperous Vancouver fish canner, became chairman and other influential persons who played leading roles included lawyers and prominent military men. The support of Sir Charles H. Tupper and Walter Scott, a former premier of Saskatchewan, gave additional prestige. Returned soldiers organizations and labor also placed representatives on ML committees.<sup>79</sup>

Within a month the ML held a well-attended public meeting in Vancouver which was addressed by Tupper and others and the meeting went on record as favoring a system of government control and the sale of liquor by permit.<sup>80</sup> The League was definitely not in favor of a return to conditions as they had existed before prohibition. In Victoria, a group complementary

to the Moderation League was called Liberty League, and the two leagues worked together although the ML appeared to be a much stronger organization. The aim of the Liberty League was stated in its publication Liberty, and was to work for personal liberty, a liberty which would allow every individual to act according to his own conscience.<sup>81</sup>

The choice of the name "Moderation" League was not original for the British Columbia organization. It had been used in Quebec in 1919 and possibly elsewhere, but it was a brilliant selection nonetheless for under such a title cooperation of many different interest groups was possible and moderation had about it an attractive reasonableness that prohibition completely lacked. Actually the use of the term "moderation" as both a name and a slogan followed closely in the tradition of the prohibition movement which had long operated under the name of the "temperance" movement.

The growing influence of the ML became evident when a delegation led by Charles Wilson called on the premier in mid-March before the government had made any official announcement on the referendum question.<sup>82</sup> The delegation requested the sale of light wine and beer with meals and liquor under government sale by permit. Permission to draft a new liquor bill was also asked for, because the PPA had had this privilege in the past. In replying, Oliver stated that the government was faced with three alternatives: that the government accept a new liquor act as drafted by the ML; that the government draft its own bill within the framework suggested by the ML; or, that the

government draft a bill as government policy. The fact that the PPA was not even to be consulted was another indication of its declining influence with the government.

Prohibitionists failed to recognize the public support being attracted to the ML and considered the League as nothing more than a front for the liquor interests -- "the same old crowd under a new name," stated one prohibitionist.<sup>83</sup> The leaders of the League were obviously respectable men but it was claimed that the organization was heavily financed by brewers and hotelmen, and even by the wine interests of France. In referring to the League one brewer apparently used the phrase "our moderation league" and that was proof enough for the PPA.<sup>84</sup> However, in the referendum campaign that followed the ML appeared more cautious in the use of its money than did the PPA. The ML denied any connection with the liquor interests and in fact persons involved in the liquor business were specifically barred from membership.<sup>85</sup> Brewers made their own representation to the government and opposed government control.<sup>86</sup>

After a brief flurry of convention activity in the spring of 1920 both the ML and the PPA began to await the government's announcement as to exactly when the referendum would be held. Both sides planned to campaign vigorously only the last few weeks prior to the referendum. Uncertainty prevailed until September 10 when the date was set for October 20.

In the meantime ML and PPA workers improved their respective organizations at the local level and raised funds. The

PPA method of fund raising was to assess towns and districts for a certain amount of money and leave it up to the local committee to collect it. In this way Vancouver was assessed for \$16,000, Nanaimo \$650, Penticton \$600, etc. The Spencers donated \$1000 to the PPA as did W.H. Malkin, while other businessmen gave lesser amounts, but not all areas raised the quota assessed them and the PPA constantly found itself in financial difficulty.<sup>87</sup> In Victoria, Rev. R.M. Thompson, who was in charge of a PPA office there, admitted early in September that he had been able to raise only \$200 and that "a canvass of the businessmen has not yet been undertaken."<sup>88</sup> W.G. Fortune complained of the financial situation in a letter to a prominent Vancouver businessman.

I am free to admit that it [is] more difficult to raise funds under the present circumstances than ever in the past. So many seemed carried away with the thought of Government Control.<sup>89</sup>

Nevertheless it was the contention of the PPA that if the facts were presented to the people they would unhesitatingly vote for prohibition and money was poured into the campaign so unstintingly that when it was all over the PPA found that it had spent \$30,000 and was \$9,000 in debt.<sup>90</sup>

Remembering labor opposition in times past the PPA hired one T. Richardson to visit logging, fishing and mining areas, cultivate the good will of labor leaders and "organize the labor voters."<sup>91</sup> Seasoned prohibition veterans, like William Savage and Dr. Telford, also toured the province holding as many meetings as possible. The prohibitionists again counted on

and received the support of the evangelical churches. The British Columbia Methodist Conference, for example, passed a motion in the summer of 1920 approving the policy of the PPA and urging all Methodist organizations to cooperate with it.<sup>92</sup>

ML methods were similar to those of the PPA. By mid-summer organizers were working in the interior and one of them chanced to travel on the same train as W. Savage. Savage wrote the PPA office from Fernie that he had gone after the "Wet" with "hammer and tongues (sic)."<sup>93</sup> Personal differences, however, did not play a large part in the campaign and the Sun commented on referendum day that on the whole the campaign had been distinguished by a "commendable freedom from personalities."<sup>94</sup>

After the first of October the campaign grew in intensity. Both sides employed the usual methods of spreading propaganda: frequent public meetings, newspaper advertisements and door-to-door canvassing. The PPA campaign appears to have been both more extensive and more expensive than that of the ML.<sup>95</sup> Far more public meetings were held by the PPA and they were often in large rented halls and auditoriums, like Dominion Hall. The ML used less expensive facilities and even school basements and only seldom held Sunday meetings, which, however, was always a very important propaganda day for the prohibitionists, both in and out of the churches. When it came to newspaper advertising the PPA had a momopoly on advertising in the World; in the Sun, which was certainly against prohibition, the PPA advertised as much if not more than the ML.

The PPA strategy was to emphasize that "Prohibition has proved . . . a blessing to many in this province" and that government control would restore undesirable social conditions.<sup>96</sup> Arguing in over-simplified terms that a government and a police officer played similar roles a PPA advertisement asked, "If the policeman who patrols Hastings Street owned a lucrative saloon business there, how many times would the keeper be pulled?"<sup>97</sup>

The ML campaign was built on the premise that prohibition was unenforceable and that the prohibition act should be repealed. "[People] wish to see a period put to violations of the law on a wholesale scale," wrote the editor of the Victoria Colonist, a newspaper that backed the ML.<sup>98</sup> A typical advertisement stated that what was needed was

the inculcation of true temperance principles consistent with personal liberty and the elimination of the causes of the deplorable loss of respect for the laws of the land engendered by the Prohibition Act.<sup>99</sup>

At first, the Sun reported, the referendum campaign was staged before an apathetic audience.<sup>100</sup> Unlike the 1916 campaign, there was scarcely any heckling. To the leaders of the ML apathy could easily play into the hands of the dedicated prohibitionists and attempts were made to overcome it. One ML advertisement read

#### APATHY

The Greatest Enemy of Freedom  
Whether you are a Prohibitionist or for  
Moderation and Government Control, do your  
duty by British Columbia and

VOTE<sup>101</sup>

In the last few public meetings before voting day both sides reported enthusiastic and widespread support for their

respective views and both the ML and the PPA predicted victory for their side. If PPA leaders had any inkling of the imminent defeat of their cause they gave no indication of it, despite some warnings from their own workers. A letter to prohibition headquarters from a door-to-door canvasser gave some indication of public feeling about prohibition and showed that the watchdog activities of the PPA had made an impression on the public opposite to what had been intended.

During this week I have been devoting a good deal of time to canvassing in my districts & I found the main argument advanced by the neutrals & opposition was the non-enforcement of the Act & that therefore it was better to turn over the control of the liquor traffic to the Government. . . . The general feeling seems to be that it was up to the Prohibition Party to see that the provisions of the Prohibition Act were enforced . . .<sup>102</sup>

When the ballots had all been counted the prohibitionists were stunned to discover that they had been overwhelmingly defeated by a vote of 92,095 to 55,448.<sup>103</sup> In the entire province only the rural centres of Chilliwack and Richmond voted in favor of retaining the prohibition act. The Okanagan area had long supported the prohibitionists but now voted for government control by a narrow margin. Both Victoria and Vancouver voted for government control by margins of about two to one.

When the results of the vote were known considerable astonishment was expressed at the outcome. "I am surprised," said John Oliver, "I expected that the Prohibition Act would have been approved by the electors."<sup>104</sup> For the moderationists the surprise was a pleasant one. They had been confident of winning in the larger urban centres but had been in doubt about



other areas. Prohibitionists had been confident that the women, voting for the first time, would support prohibition and were bitterly disappointed that the women so obviously supported government control. W. Fortune complained of the "immaturity of girl voters" that had resulted in the defeat of the prohibition act.<sup>105</sup> Because of the slick campaign of the ML "the people were deceived, good people, church people. . . ." <sup>106</sup> In characteristic fashion, prohibitionists explained the referendum result as only a temporary set-back, not a defeat. The executive secretary of the PPA was quoted as saying that

we feel certain that within a short time there will be a desire on the part of the public to undo what they have done today. . . . The electors have created a stew in which they must sizzle for a time.<sup>107</sup>

A few days after the voting, 250 Victoria dries held a consolation banquet. "A little downhill run will give impetus for the rush over the top," stated Mrs. Spofford of the WCTU, in an after-dinner speech.<sup>108</sup>

In the final analysis what was most important as far as prohibition was concerned was how the government interpreted the vote. Brewers and moderationists petitioned the government both before and after the referendum to allow the open sale of light wine and beer but the government spurned this suggestion. Prohibitionists maintained that the referendum did not indicate "disapproval of prohibition, but disappointment at its non-enforcement," but the Liberal government thought differently.<sup>109</sup> The vote had been against prohibition and that system was now at an end. Oliver explained the referendum verdict as

neither a demand for, or an authorization of, a return to the bar or the saloon, but rather as an instruction to the government to make available for use, liquor in reasonable quantities and at reasonable prices, subject to restrictions which will prevent abuses.<sup>110</sup>

The premier's contention that British Columbians did not want a return to the saloon of the pre-prohibition period was correct and was borne out in another plebiscite held in 1924 in which the question was one of reopening bars for the sale of beer and it was voted down. In view of the fact that a lack of popular sympathy for prohibition had made the act almost impossible to enforce, it was curious that Oliver now introduced a new government control of liquor sales act containing restrictions equally unpopular. All near-beer bars would now have to close because the definition of an alcoholic beverage was changed to any liquid containing 1% proof spirits instead of the 2½% limit of prohibition days. By appealing to Ottawa, the provincial government had the right of private importation removed and henceforth liquor could only be purchased in sealed packages from a government liquor store by a person who had first obtained a liquor permit. It was clear that when the liquor question was reduced to one of provincial revenue the government could show an amazing alacrity in producing legislation that complemented that goal. War veterans publicly denounced the restrictions in the new act and stated their intention to continue selling beer in their clubs.<sup>111</sup> The bootlegger found his market not greatly diminished, though he would have to move more carefully now since his trade impaired government income. Writing about liquor laws that provided for

government control a legal expert warned that

this attempt to swell the profits of the government monopoly causes those provisions to lack any moral or popular psychological backing, . . .<sup>112</sup>

As for the prohibition act, it was to remain in force until June 15, 1921 and on that date prohibition slipped quietly out of the province. On that day the Sun reported that

Prohibition is gone and Moderation is here. At midnight every hotel and jitney bar closed its doors on the sale of near-beer. At 11 a.m. today the Province of British Columbia enters the liquor business.<sup>113</sup>

The whole affair did not appear to create much of a stir. "No one seems to be very excited about it," wrote the editor of the Sun. "Strangely enough men are going about their business this morning just as usual . . ." <sup>114</sup> There was, of course, no place to celebrate.

## CONCLUSION

Temperance sentiment in British Columbia was provoked by the social problems that accompanied the loosely controlled liquor outlets and this sentiment was further encouraged by the churches as they grew stronger in the developing province. Early temperance feeling expressed itself in the coming of temperance societies and restrictive liquor legislation. What British Columbians wanted was a smooth-working, prosperous society based on an acceptable moral standard.

The prohibition movement overlapped with this social ideal at many points and was acceptable enough as a movement of social betterment even to the point of local control over the question of permitting the licensing of saloons. The fact that the Liberal party, in its platform, linked prohibition with progressive reforms like extending the franchise to women and the elimination of government corruption, gained additional support for local option and prohibition legislation.

Leadership of the prohibition movement came from merchants, businessmen and professional men of the middle class. The great majority of these prohibitionists were members of the Baptist, Methodist and Presbyterian churches although there were also many Presbyterians as well as most Anglicans and Roman Catholics who favored restrictive liquor legislation rather than prohibition and the Anglican and Presbyterian churches represented the

two churches with the largest memberships in the province. Brewers and hotelmen along with many members of the Moderation League, people who openly fought against prohibition, were frequently members of those churches that continued to define temperance as moderation. Opposition to prohibition also came from people outside the churches, including members of organized labor. Although the temperance movement had begun as a movement of moral reform, the debate on the prohibition question was carried on in terms of citizenship, patriotism, justice and economics, largely because of the war and its aftermath.

That extensive support for prohibition existed in British Columbia was indicated by the results of the Dominion prohibition plebiscite of 1898, the provincial local option plebiscite of 1909 and the provincial prohibition referendum of 1916, all of which ran in favor of restricting or eliminating the liquor traffic. However, before World War I, the prohibition forces in the province were not as powerful as similar organizations elsewhere in Canada and were unable to gain a provincial local option law, while the other provinces were gradually being dried up by such laws.

The outbreak of World War I created an emergency situation and the people and government of British Columbia and indeed, of Canada, were faced with the serious question of conserving all available resources -- money, manpower, foodstuffs -- for the war effort. Prohibitionist propaganda skillfully exploited this situation by emphasizing that the liquor traffic interfered with both individual efficiency and the economic strength of the

nefarious trade any longer. When peace returned public support for prohibition ended and (the act became notorious for the way in which it was either circumvented or violated rather than in the way it was enforced.) Temperance sentiment was also affected by a post-war pessimism toward all efforts promoting or claiming to promote social progress, particularly legislation with moral overtones, like prohibition. Prohibitionists fought hard to retain the act but they were completely defeated and prohibition was repealed.

## NOTES ON CHAPTER III

1. Presbyterian Church, General Assembly, Acts and Proceedings, 1920, Appendices, p. 15.

2. Vancouver Daily Province, Oct. 1, 1917, p. 15.

3. Ibid., and also Sept. 29, 1917, p. 3.

4. World (Vancouver), Jan. 23, 1918, p. 1.

5. Copy of letter from J.S. Sclater, prohibition commissioner to the Honourable Arthur Griffith, Sydney, Australia, March 11, 1920, People's Prohibition Association (PPA) Papers, Alcohol Research and Educational Council (AREC), Vancouver. See also Reginald E. Hose, Prohibition or Control? Canada's Experience With the Liquor Problem 1921-1927 (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1928), p. 53.

6. Letter from J.S. Sclater to Arthur Griffith, March 11, 1920, PPA Papers, AREC.

7. "George Norgan Speaks, 1956", p. 3. In files of J.S. Peden, Labatt's Lucky Lager, New Westminster, and shown during interview, June 4, 1968. Norgan was then president of the brewery.

8. Ibid.

9. Copy of letter from J.S. Sclater to Hon. Arthur Griffiths, Australia, March 11, 1920, p. 3, PPA Papers, AREC.

10. Vancouver Daily Sun, Jan. 31, 1920, pp. 1, 9.

11. Daily Colonist (Victoria), Jan. 20, 1920, p. 2. Mr. Justice Morrison gave the commission verdict. He stated that compensation was legally entitled only if a person or his property was displaced under "right of eminent domain" as in expropriation. Prohibition was a law passed to promote the general welfare of the public, and therefore losses incurred by state removal of licenses or former business rights did not involve compensation.

12. O. Tandberg, "Human Progress and its Doubters", Dalhousie Review, VI (1927), 434.

13. David J. Pittman and Charles R. Snyder, eds., Society Culture and Drinking Patterns (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1962), p. 561.

14. Alcohol, Science and Society (New Haven: Journal of Studies on Alcohol, 1945), p. 99.

15. Vancouver Daily Sun, April 8, 1920, p. 1. At least one judge was sympathetic to prohibition -- John A. Forin, of Nelson. He was a past president of the Moral and Social Reform Council of his area and chaired the first prohibition rally held in Nelson. See his Diary, Nov., 1909, and Sept. 2, 1915. About enforcing prohibition law his diary says nothing.
- ~~16.~~ Letter from W.G. Fortune to J. Sclater, Sept. 17, 1919, PPA Papers, AREC.
- ~~17.~~ Daily Colonist (Victoria), Jan. 21, 1919, p. 10.
18. Unsigned letter to Hon. Arthur Griffith, Australia, March 30, 1920, p. 3, PPA Papers, AREC.
19. Victoria Daily Times, Nov. 20, 1916, p. 12.
- ~~20.~~ Interview with J.S. Peden, Personnel Manager, Labatt's Lucky Lager, New Westminster, June 4, 1968.
- ~~21.~~ John Oliver, Personal Diary and Notebook, II, April 13, 1920, p. 137, PABC.
- ~~22.~~ Margaret Ormsby, British Columbia: a History (Macmillans in Canada, 1958), p. 407.
23. Ibid., p. 399. For a detailed account of increased provincial financial responsibilities after the war see D.V. Smiley, ed., The Rowell-Sirois Report, I (abridged), (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1963), pp. 129-31.
- ~~24.~~ World (Vancouver), March 4, 1919, p. 11.
25. Ibid., p. 12.
- ~~26.~~ Vancouver, Report of Joint Committee on Broadening of Municipal Taxation (Vancouver, 1920).
- ~~27.~~ Charles W. Stokes, "Prohibition's Decline and Fall in Canada," American Review of Reviews, LXXVII (1928), 172.
- ~~28.~~ Alfred Lewis, Facts and Figures Against Prohibition (Edmonds, B.C.: Burnaby Printing, n.d.), pp. 27-9.
29. B.C., Sessional Papers, 1921, II, y 5.
30. North Vancouver's Police Chief Arthur Davis was suspended for slackness in enforcing the prohibition act and so was his successor, M.B. Martinson.
31. Oliver, Notebook, II, Feb. 26, 1920, p. 74, PABC.
32. Victoria Daily Times, June 16, 1920, p. 1.



33. Daily Colonist (Victoria), July 30, 1919, p. 5.

34. World (Vancouver), March 29, 1920, p. 2.

35. B.C. Journal, 1920, p. 45.

36. W.H. Smith, The Liquor Traffic in British Columbia (Board of Home Missions and Social Service, Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1922), p. 20. It should be remembered that the use of liquor or wine for medicinal purposes was very common and just how much it was used is described in a somewhat exaggerated fashion by Cecil Clark. He says that doctors prescribed

champagne for the stomach; Port wine for the blood; Claret for the liver; Tokay for the system; Brandy for faintness; Rum for colds; Sherry for weakness; Gin for the kidneys; White wine for fatness; Scotch whiskey for the lungs; Blackberry brandy for dysentery.

See Daily Colonist (Victoria), "The Islander," April 16, 1967.

37. Sessional Papers, 1920, II, M 51.

38. James Morton, Honest John Oliver (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1933), p. 199.

39. Victoria Daily Times, July 4, 1919, p. 18.

40. Ibid., Dec. 26, 1919, p. 1.

41. Vancouver Daily Sun, April 8, 1920, p. 1.

42. World (Vancouver), Jan. 23, 1918, p. 1.

43. "The Farce of Government Control", p. 9, PPA Papers, AREC.

44. Vancouver Daily Sun, March 2, 1920, p. 1.

45. Daily Colonist (Victoria), Aug. 13, 1918, p. 5.

46. Alan Morley, Vancouver, From Milltown to Metropolis (Vancouver: Mitchell Press, 1961), p. 155. ]

47. Vancouver Daily Province, "Twenty Years Ago", Aug. 1, 1940.

48. Vancouver Daily Sun, Jan. 3, 1919, p. 1.

49. Mrs. Farris, the wife of the attorney-general, made a speech supporting prohibition in which she stated these figures. In 1917 there were 2372 drunk convictions in British Columbia; in 1919, under prohibition, 778; in 1917 there were 287 persons

in prison; in 1919, 114. See Victoria Daily Times, Oct. 20, 1920, p. 18.

50. ". . . Government Control", p. 10, PPA Papers, AREC.

51. PPA Minutes, Feb. 15, 1918, AREC.

52. Edmund H. Oliver, The Liquor Traffic in the Prairie Provinces (Board of Home Missions and Social Service, Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1923), p. 5.

53. World (Vancouver), March 6, 1919, p. 4.

54. Unsigned PPA letter to J. Sclater, March 26, 1919, PPA Papers, AREC.

55. Tandberg, p. 435. For a discussion of how laws, like liquor laws, create new social problems see A.M. Rose, "Law and the Causation of Social Problems," Social Problems, XVI (1968), 33-43.

56. Letter of W. Fortune to W.E. Burdis, B.C. Salmon Canneries, Jan. 31, 1918, PPA Papers, AREC.

57. Letter to H.A. Fraser to W.G. Fortune, Feb. 3, 1918, PPA Papers, AREC.

58. Letter from A.S. Miller to W.G. Fortune, March 22, 19?, PPA Papers, AREC.

59. Letter from W.G. Fortune to J. Sclater, Sept. 8, 1920, PPA Papers, AREC.

60. Letter from J. Sclater to W.G. Fortune, Sept. 9, 1920, PPA Papers, AREC.

61. Daily Colonist (Victoria), Dec. 12, 1918, p. 7. A "stool pigeon" is a civilian informer. It was also suggested to John Oliver that the B.C. police be reorganized along the lines of the Royal Irish Constabulary, a system that permitted citizens to serve as policemen on a part-time basis.

62. Ibid.

63. Ibid., Dec. 24, 1919, p. 3.

64. Victoria Daily Times, Dec. 10, 1919, p. 4.

65. Morton, p. 199.

66. John Oliver, Notebook, I, March 21, 1919.

67. Victoria Daily Times, Nov. 24, 1919, p. 1.

68. Vancouver Daily Sun, Feb. 3, 1920, p. 1.
69. Victoria Daily Times, Feb. 6, 1920, p. 18.
70. Vancouver Daily Sun, Feb. 17, 1920, p. 9.
71. World (Vancouver) Feb. 19, 1920, pp. 1, 3.
72. Vancouver Daily Sun, April 10, 1920, p. 1.
73. Government liquor sales in 1919 totalled over \$1,500,000 and in 1920 just over \$900,000. Fines and forfeitures in 1919 brought in another \$69,000. See Sessional Papers, 1920, II, M43-52; 1921, II, M 51 and Y 1-12.
74. Vancouver Daily Sun, Oct. 17, 1920, cited in Adams, p. 82.
75. Ibid., Oct. 12, 1920, p. 3.
76. See Daily Colonist (Victoria), Jan. 16, 1919, p. 2 and Victoria Daily Times, Feb. 4, 1919, p. 7.
77. Victoria Daily Times, March 26, 1919, p. 15.
78. Vancouver Daily Sun, Feb. 4, 1920, p. 6.
79. Daily Colonist (Victoria), Jan. 23, 1919, p. 5.
80. Vancouver Daily Sun, March 6, 1920, p. 1.
81. Victoria Daily Times, Feb. 4, 1919, p. 7.
82. Vancouver Daily Sun, March 18, 1920, p. 1.
83. Victoria Daily Times, Feb. 5, 1919, p. 8.
84. ". . . Government Control," pp. 10-11, PPA Papers, A AREC.
85. Victoria Daily Times, Feb. 4, 1919, p. 7 and Vancouver Daily Sun, Jan. 17, 1919, p. 2.
86. John Oliver, Notebook, II, March 30, 1920, p. 129.
87. Letter from W.G. Fortune to J.J. Coughlan, Jan. 10, 1921, PPA Papers, AREC.
88. Letter from R.M. Thompson to J.W. Foster, Chairman, PPA finance committee, Sept. 2, 1920, PPA Papers, AREC.
89. Letter from W.G. Fortune to Charles Woodward, Sept. 4, 1920, PPA Papers, AREC.

90. Letter from W.G. Fortune to Manager, National Biscuit Co., Vancouver, Dec. 9, 1920 and W.G. Fortune to J.J. Coughlan, Vancouver, Jan. 10, 1921, PPA Papers, AREC.

91. Letter from W. Savage, PPA, to T. Richardson, June 16, 1920, PPA Papers, AREC. Actually union leaders were much less hostile to prohibition now that they had seen its effects on union members. Union leaders found paid-up union membership increasing and the meetings better attended. A 1918 convention of the B.C. Federation of Labour voted down a statement expressing opposition to prohibition. Another motion that would have placed the Federation behind the sale of beer and wine was also defeated. See Victoria Daily Times, Jan. 29, 1918, p. 8.

92. Western Methodist Recorder (Victoria), July, 1920, p. 3.

93. Letter from W. Savage to G. Hammond, July 8, 1920, PPA Papers, AREC.

94. Vancouver Daily Sun, Oct. 20, 1920, p. 1.

95. See Ibid., Oct. 12, 1920, p. 3 and ibid., Oct. 16, 1920, p. 7.

96. Ibid., Oct. 2, 1920, p. 2.

97. Ibid., Oct. 9, 1920, p. 10.

98. Daily Colonist (Victoria), Sept. 21, 1920, p. 4.

99. Cited in Smith, The Liquor Traffic . . ., p. 15.

100. Vancouver Daily Sun, Oct. 20, 1920, p. 1.

101. Ibid., Oct. 14, 1920, p. 14.

102. Letter from A. Wallace to Secretary, PPA, Oct. 9, 1920, PPA Papers, AREC.

103. For complete results see the British Columbia Gazette, LX, No. 52, Dec. 23, 1920, p. 4899.

104. Daily Colonist (Victoria), Oct. 21, 1920, p. 1.

105. Vancouver Daily Sun, Oct. 21, 1920, p. 3.

106. ". . . Government Control", p. 12, PPA Papers, AREC.

107. Vancouver Daily Sun, Oct. 21, 1920, p. 3.

108. Daily Colonist (Victoria), Oct. 30, 1920, p. 1.

109. World (Vancouver), Oct. 21, 1920, p. 3.
110. Vancouver Daily Province, Oct. 21, 1920, p. 1.
111. Vancouver Daily Sun, June 15, 1921, p. 1.
112. J.F. Davison, "The Problem of Liquor Legislation in Canada," Canadian Bar Review, (September, 1926), p. 470.
113. Vancouver Daily Sun, June 1, 5, 1921, p. 1.
114. Ibid., p. 6.

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Interview with J.S. Peden, personnel manager, Labatt's Lucky Lager, New Westminster, June 4, 1968. Mr. Peden also showed me a number of documents: "George Norgan Speaks, 1956"; a list of all places with liquor licenses in and around Victoria, 1900; and a receipt showing the price of liquor in Vancouver, 1902.